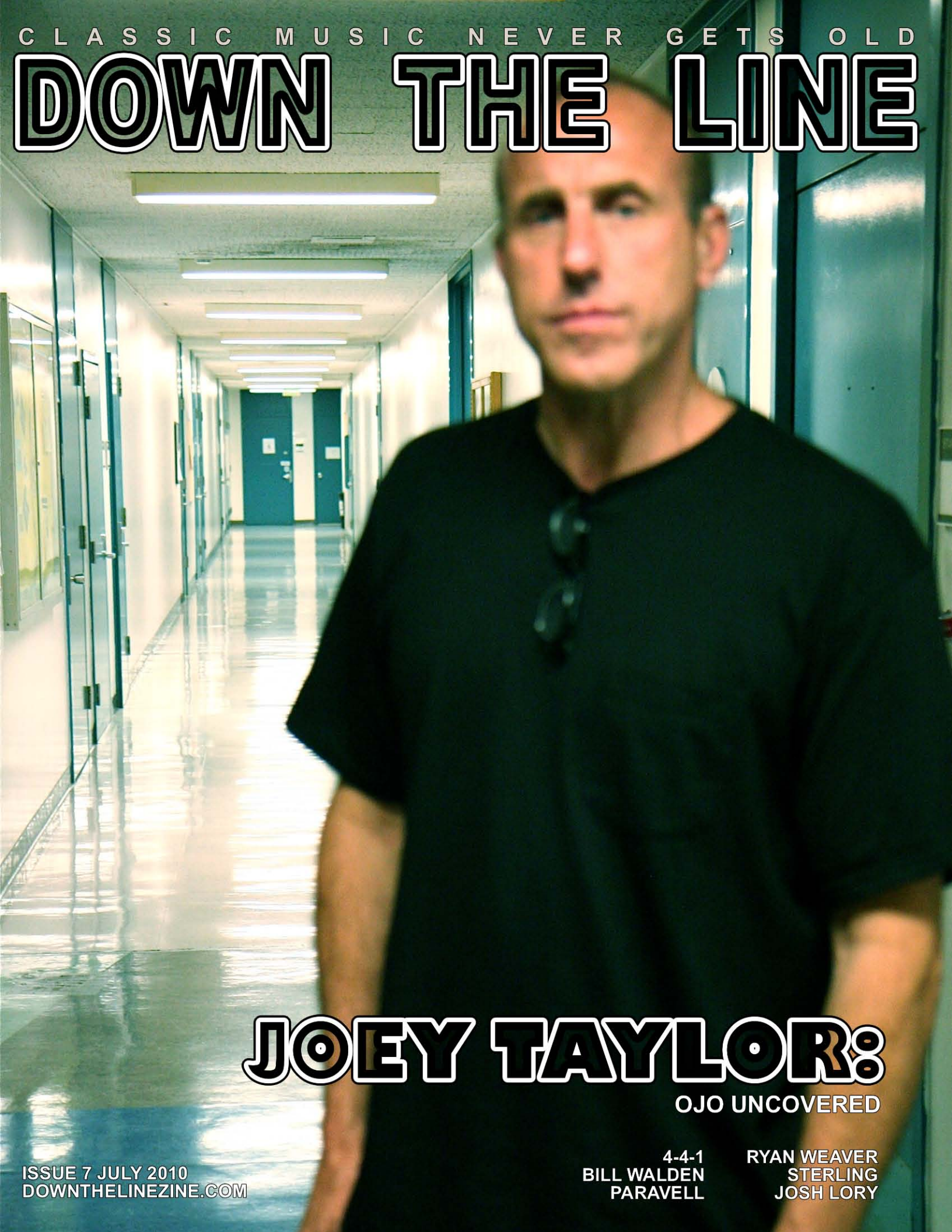


CLASSIC MUSIC NEVER GETS OLD

DOWN THE LINE



JOEY TAYLOR

OJO UNCOVERED

ISSUE 7 JULY 2010
DOWNTHELINEZINE.COM

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Streams of Mercy is transforming the lives of orphans around the world by partnering with existing orphanages to raise awareness, to raise funding, and to send volunteer work teams. Streams of Mercy was "established to meet the needs of the most needy individuals in nations around the world. These individuals are often children who are desperate and helpless in changing their circumstances. The organization is actively involved in disaster relief, both man-made and natural, by mobilizing volunteers and resources to assist those in need." streams of mercy.org

(Streams of Mercy did not buy this ad nor do they endorse this magazine - just givin' ya food for thought)

YOUR WORDS ARE NOT MINE

Despite some accusations to the contrary, we do try to be balanced and fair here at Down The Line. Except against the music industry giant, of course. Most people get this... but we still get surprised at those that don't. Not that they don't get it, but the weird logical leaps they go through to prove (to us, at least) that they don't.

A few people need to learn that printing someone else's position in a magazine does not equal to us agreeing (or disagreeing) with what they say. The Earth is not going to stop rotating because someone else got to say something that I don't like.

Of course, this is really just part of the culture we live in. How many million blog posts have been written just because someone has to get the last word in? The older I get, the less I care about correcting every wrong sentence in the world and the more I become concerned with righting what is wrong in me or the people that I am called to advocate for (my friends and the needy).

<http://www.downthelinezine.com>

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DOWN THE LINE

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WRITE US Letters and comments need to contain your full name. All submissions become property of Down the Line E-zine and may be edited or condensed. Or even printed out and framed if you really kiss our... um... never mind....

VISION:

Down the Line covers bands that explored the intersection between faith and art in the 1980s through the early 1990s - even though they were probably never accepted in to what is called "Contemporary Christian Music" because they were too edgy or alternative or liberal or for whatever reason. Some of these bands may still be making music today, and others may have moved on. We cover these bands (active or dormant) as well as any new projects by former members of these bands and any new bands that may have the same spirit as these bands.

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(there would be a whole lot more technical mumbo jumbo in this space if we were more professional. But that would be boring and all...)

LETTERS TO US

Veil of Ashes Bassist Speaks

My favorite issue to date..... Sean of course I know very well and Ric has become a friend through FB but, a good friend all the same. I like the way every one who told their story came from a very different place in lives with their identity which shows how human this thing is indeed.....

Brian Kirsch (aka Sterling)

(thanks Sterling – and this issue, we even get to hear more from you – bonus!)

THE Christopher Speaks

Thank you for all the effort it took to put this issue together. Christians need to hear these stories, and I'm grateful that you were open-minded to see them as important enough to share with us.

The evangelical Christian church as a general rule isn't comfortable with anything that isn't black and white, and often prefers to judge first and ask questions later... if they even bother to.

We can argue theology until we're blue in the face, but unless we see the other person as a human being with the same needs, concerns, desires, hopes and fears as us--rather than a Faceless Other With An Agenda--we'll never come to any place of understanding or reconciliation.

Our walk with Christ is an ongoing, lifelong process, and while it's easier to pass judgment on others rather than extend grace to them, it's the latter that Jesus has called to do.

Thanks again.

Christopher™

(I was going to name one of my children your name, but since it is trademarked... back to the drawing board...)

Flavor of the Month

Hey there!

Just wanted to let you guys know what a fine job you're doing on this magazine. It's been a long time since there's actually been a music magazine that I look forward to reading. The Christian market is so concerned with the "flavor of the month" that so many great artists get lost in the mix. Thank you for covering some of my favorites (King's X, Terry Taylor, Lost Dogs, etc.). I was particularly touched by the tribute to Gene Eugene. He remains one of my favorite singers and songwriters and it was great to read the reflections (warts and all) of his friends and family. And though I've never been a fan of Brian Healy and D.A.S. I appreciate that you printed his interview "as is," so to speak. I wish more Christian magazines would have that kind of integrity. Speaking of integrity, not many Christian zines would give Dug Pinnick the time of day anymore so thank you for that as well.

As of the date of this email Lost Dogs will release "Old Angel," their Route 66 album tomorrow. Any chance on doing a Lost Dogs feature about the project? What about The Choir's new album? Or Sixpence None the Richer, who are current recording an album (if I recall correctly)?

There is no other site doing what you guys do that I know of. Just want to thank you again for all the hard work!

Blessings,
Adam Sherwood

(Thanks, Adam – and some of those bands are coming in the future!)

Have any other questions, comments, theological musings, etc? We would love to hear them – come be our friend on FaceBook or comment on our blog. We also do that Twitter thing occasionally.

Burnt Toast Vinyl

[://www.burnttoastvinyl.com](http://www.burnttoastvinyl.com)

- Burnt Toast will be releasing the vinyl version of the new **Starflyer 59** album, *The Changing of the Guard*. Their version will include a bonus 7-inch.
- Also out on Burnt Toast soon will be the vinyl version of **Woven Hand's** *The Threshingfloor*.
- At one point, there will also be a deluxe vinyl re-issue of **Starflyer 59's** *Gold*. Not too many details on this one yet, by BTV has been collecting all kinds of goodies.

Daniel Amos

[://www.danielamos.com](http://www.danielamos.com)

New in the Daniel Amos store: *Little, Big* by Terry Taylor is back for sale. Also, copies of the tour CD *An Intimate Evening with Terry Taylor* are also available. Many rumors of other DA-related issues and activity, but no official word yet.

Subdivision Records

[://subdivisiontheory.com](http://subdivisiontheory.com)

Subdivision is a new music label created by "Like-minded artists helping each other make music they believe in." Bands / musicians involved so far include **Cameraphone**, **CVSC**, **Leslie DuPre-Grimaud**, and **Stranger Kings**. Many of the Northern Records mainstays are involved in some way or another (Andy, Eric, Herb, Jesse). Look for some interesting music, podcasts, videos, remixes and other coolness in the future.

Intense Millineum Records

[://intensemilennium.com](http://intensemilennium.com)

Intense Millennium Records is a new label (a partnership between Divine Metal Distro, Roxx Productions, Josh Dieckmann, and Sandy Scafedi) that is dedicated to releasing fully licensed material from the Intense /

Frontline / Alarma Records group. They will initially release five titles in November, and then in 2011 they have the goal of re-issue two albums per month. The first five albums are *Human Sacrifice* and *Once Dead* from **Vengeance Rising**, *Rebellion* by **Sacred Warrior**, and *Bloodgood* and *Detonation* by **Bloodgood**. January 2011 will bring the re-issue of *Gut Level Music* by **The Altar Boys** and *Master's Command* by **Sacred Warrior**.

All albums will be re-mastered. Some will even have bonus tracks added. New artwork is being designed by Jim Heru.

While that initial list is heavy on the metal side, many punk and alternative bands have been mentioned, including **Scaterd Few**, **Michael Knott**, and **Daniel Amos**.

Velvet Blue Records

[://velvetbluemusic.com](http://velvetbluemusic.com)

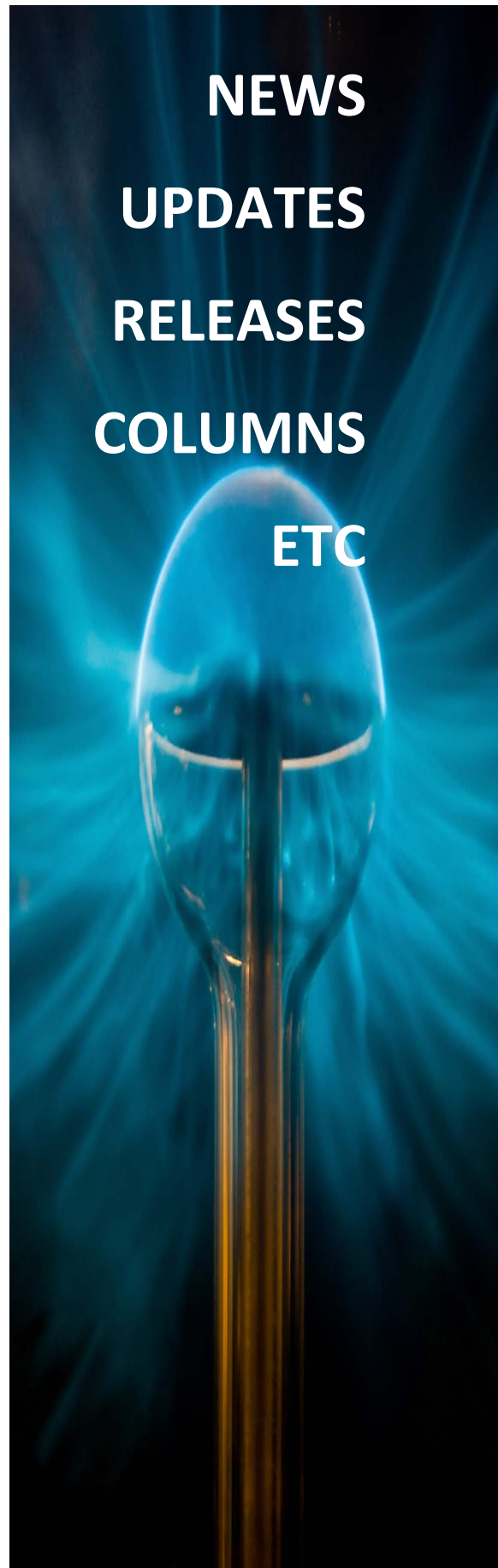
VBM artists have been busy recently:

- *O Ye Devastator* by **Doug Burr** is out and getting rave reviews everywhere.
- *Chronosynclastic* by **The Prids** is out and also getting rave reviews (see a theme here?). A vinyl version will be out soon.
- Burr and The Prids as well as **Kissing Cousins**, **Telegraph Canyon**, and **The Langley Sisters** are all touring or playing live - see the VBM site or Twitter feed for details.

Retroactive Records

[://retroactiverecords.net](http://retroactiverecords.net)

Retroactive continues to release many hard to find albums. Out now in the re-issue of *The Fall* by **King James**, two classic albums by **Vision** (*Vision* and *Mountain in the Sky*), and *Beyond the Crystal Sea* by **Jimmy Hotz**. Coming in the future are ultra-rare albums by **Messiah** (*Going Insane* and *Final Warning*), **Mass**

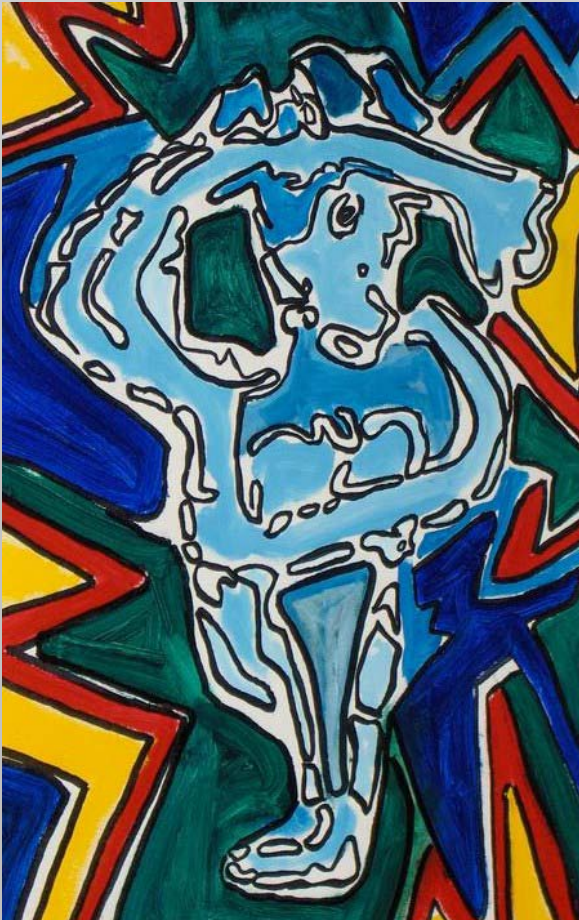




There are a couple of things I want to make sure that I note in this issue. These things came in and I forgot to get them to Matt in time. Herb Grimaud's project The Sound Gallery will be hopefully working on some new music soon, but in the meantime Herb is releasing all Sound Gallery albums for free downloads at <http://thesoundgallery.bandcamp.com/>. If you are into dark ambient music the Sound Gallery is right up your alley. Also tune in to the new band that Herb is in, Stranger Kings, as they release new music track by track. <http://www.facebook.com/strangerkings>

Due to legal reasons, Josh Lory has changed the name of his group from Western Grace to Patriots of the Wasteland. Also, for the first time we are featuring an article by Josh in this issue, typically he writes a bunch of reviews but this time he decided to do both. Check out his picture and see his new baby girl as well, congratulations to him and Brenda!

I hope that everyone reading enjoys this issue, sorry that it was late getting out, that was my fault. I'm really pleased with all the people we were able to interview, it was a bunch of fun to do. What else? I saw Bill Mallonee and his wife Muriah Rose play again a few weeks ago. They are amazing artists who never cease to wow me each time I see them. There is an amazing project in the works that pertains to Bill, keep your eyes and ears open. Until the next time, be blessed in all that you do...



(Mass and the unreleased *Fighter*), **Randy Stonehill** (*Lazarus Heart*), **The Bleed** (*Ouch* re-issued as *Take Back A Life*), and **Saint** (*In the Battle*) as well as a new album by **Holy Blood** (*Shining Sun*). Oh, and if you are into some great guitar work, there is also the new one from **The Rex Carroll Band** titled *That Was Then, This is Now*.

Retroactive also unveiled a new website recently, so check it out for more details.

Crossoads of America
[://www.xrarecords.com](http://www.xrarecords.com)

XRA continues to bring the vinyl and other coolness:

- *O Ye Devastator* by **Doug Burr** will be out on vinyl soon - pre-orders open now.
- *Old* by **Starflyer 59** will be out on vinyl picture disc soon - see the website for details.
- **husband&wife** recently finished the final mixes for their new album *Proud Flesh*.
- **Rodeo Ruby Love** and **Metavari** are still on tour.
- Planning has gotten into full-swing for this year's XRAfest in September.

The 77s
[://www.77s.com](http://www.77s.com)

The *Direct* ep is back on sale in the 77s store. Also available is self-titled unique tour release by Michael Roe, where Mr. Roe performs covers of Lost Dogs, 77s, and solo classics. Other out-of-print fan club albums may make an appearance in the future.

SLIDE
[://www.slidemusicgroup.com](http://www.slidemusicgroup.com)

SLIDE continues to move forward on new music and projects. They are currently filming a video for the track "Two Worlds Collide" is also up for your listening pleasure on their FaceBook Page.

Lost Dogs
[://www.thelostdogs.com](http://www.thelostdogs.com)

The new Lost Dogs album, *Old Angel*, is out now and getting rave reviews. If you

haven't heard it yet, head over to their web store and grab a copy.

The Choir

[://www.thechoir.net](http://www.thechoir.net)

Speaking of new albums, the new album by The Choir (*Burning Like The Midnight Sun*) is also out, and also garnering rave reviews. See their website for purchasing information.

The Choir will be also be performing at an art opening at Graphite Galleries in New Orleans. The featured artist is R.R. Lyons who created the stunning cover art for The Choir's new album. Lyons will be creating 11 unique pieces of art that will be inspired by each of the new songs from BLTMS. These collectibles will be available for sale only at the Gallery starting the evening of 10/16.

Starflyer 59

[://www.sf59.com](http://www.sf59.com)

Either August 11th or 12th (depending on what source you read) will bring the new SF59 album, *The Changing of the Guard*. Pre-release buzz is pretty high. Digital & vinyl versions will be available.

Bill Mallonee

[://www.billmallonee.net](http://www.billmallonee.net)

Bill is currently touring around select parts of the country - see his website for more details. Also recently released is the *Works (in) Progress Administration Vol. 8: Coal Dust Soul*. NO recent updates on the Temple Foundry project, but keep checking back on that one - it should be interesting.

The Huntingtons

[://huntingtonsonline.com](http://huntingtonsonline.com)

Coming soon: *1-2-3-4!: The Complete Early Years Remastered* - a digital box set containing everything recorded and released prior to the band signing to Tooth And Nail Records. All songs have been completely remastered and the bands says they sound great.

The Prayer Chain

[://theprayerchain.bandcamp.com](http://theprayerchain.bandcamp.com)

Mercurios and *The Neverland Sessions* are both now available for purchase on the bands Bandcamp site. There are also hints of more old material seeing the light of day.



I was hanging out with some friends recently when the topic drifted to deeper religious subjects. Two people got in a little back and forth about a certain topic. It started with one of them saying "well, I used to believe that, but now I have come to the revelation that..." After they went around a few times, I pointed out to them that they were actually saying basically the same thing and disagreeing over semantics.

At some point in life, most people get to a point where they re-shape their beliefs on something. This typically happens in the "twenty-somethings" age, but could happen later or earlier depending on how much people evaluate themselves. When I was in my 20s, I quite often said "I used to think that way, but..."

Then I got into my late thirty's and realized that I had been through a good five or six different "I used to think this, but..." on most topics. It dawned on me that our beliefs on many things are constantly evolving, so we should never look down on someone that thinks something we have moved on from. You never know if you might come back to that same belief once you figure out how silly your current one is.

Add to this that you can pretty much logically support any belief in the world, depending on what information you decide is not truth.

The article on Ojo Taylor is an example of this. He states that there is not archeological evidence for the Exodus. But even a simple Google search will turn up thousands of examples of what people claim is archaeological evidence. Some of them sound crazy. But I also remember reading a very scholarly article by an Atheist detailing archeological evidence for many Biblical events, including the Exodus and Noah's flood. Some people say it is there, others say it isn't – you just have to weigh the two opinions and decide which one you think is accurate. Ojo came to one conclusion on that, one that I disagree with. But that is his choice.

There are other issues too – like certain epistles being forgeries for example – that are controversial. There is evidence for both sides. I tend to disregard anyone that automatically labels the other side as "stupid" or "ignorant." That's never the case – they just came to a different conclusion than you. The whole Creationism vs. Evolution debate is one of those that are really hard to follow, because most people on both sides disrespect the other. There is scientific evidence for both sides on that one – I have seen evidence for and against Creationism and evidence for and against Evolution with my own eyes. The only people I have found worth listening to in this particular debate are those that respect the scientific credibility of the other side, even if they disagree with the interpretation of the evidence.

Because really, that is all it comes down to is interpretation of evidence. But I would also say to not let the bad examples on either side of an issue influence your decision. Either the Exodus did happen or it didn't. But don't decide that it didn't happen because some Christian was a jerk to you about something in the past.

The same goes for your beliefs about God. If there is a God, and if He is real – then how some jerk hypocritical Christian treats you is not going to change that fact. Don't let idiots influence your beliefs on such important matters. Author Anne Rice is a famous example of this recently. She had this to say:

"Gandhi famously said: 'I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.' When does a word (Christian) become unusable? When does it become so burdened with history and horror that it cannot be evoked without destructive controversy?"

Words only become unusable when we let circumstances control us, instead of us controlling circumstances. "Love" is a word that has been cheapened a million more times so than "Christian" by modern media, so much more so burdened by history and horror... but do we stop using it because others have misused it so badly?



JOEY TAYLOR:

OJO UNCOVERED

By Steve Ruff
Photos by Susan Ann Luce



I'm sure all our reader's need no introduction to Ojo Taylor. His mark on the early and formative days of Christian music is unmistakable. Not only did he play in Undercover – which was one of the earliest alternative bands in Christian music circles – but he also founded and ran the Broken/Brainstorm music label with Gene Eugene. Back in the day Broken/Brainstorm was the place to find great bands! There was Adam Again, Crumbacher, Youth Choir (pre-The Choir), Undercover, Common Bond, Altar Boys and many more depending on which incarnation the label was in. The roster was young, edgy and unique in every sense, from the style and dress, to the music and the message. Ojo branched out again when he released his solo album *Relative* in 1988. It was eclectic and a unique collaboration of various artists handling guest vocal duties for each track. The music on *Relative* was earthy and more in the vein of the world music genre, and it was different from pretty much anything else that was out at the time.

This is a pretty in depth interview with Ojo who took time out of an extremely busy schedule to answer these questions. There is a little history here, a little talk of new music coming and talk about the journey that he is on in his life as it relates to spiritual and practical issues. I am always interested in the journey that others are on in their life regardless of how much (or how little) they have changed. I find it interesting that it seems many of the musicians I have listened to for years and grew up with, many of them seem to have changed their views in regards to their faith. Ojo is one of those who has re-defined his walk and his belief system, and I was glad that he was willing to be open and talk about it. So enjoy this frank discussion with a man that has seen the industry from all sides.

How did Undercover come together?

Jim Nicholson and I had been playing together in bands since we were in high school. When we went through the born-again thing within weeks of each other, we continued our musical partnership and started writing more and more original music. A bit of trivia most people don't know is that our first drummer in that early incarnation was Clark Edmond who was my brother-in-law at the time and who went on to become Idle Cure's drummer. Neither Jim nor I had any prior experience with evangelicalism, Christian music, anything like that. Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, Chuck Smith's church, was doing their weekly concerts and that whole thing just tripped me out. I was brought up Catholic so it was a very different religious experience for me to see young people and bands so engaged in the practice of their faith.

Jim and I ultimately moved to what was then an emerging Calvary Chapel in Yorba Linda, although then it was really nothing more than

a bible study in a living room led by John Wimber. There were some really great musicians in that group, mostly friends of John's from his own music career, including Bill Medley of the Righteous Brothers and Ron Tutt who was Elvis' drummer, and some others too. It was just dumb luck to have ended up there, really. We just chose it because we lived in Orange County and this was the closest Calvary to us.

John's son Chris Wimber was there, and he started his band Boaz along with Ric Alba and Danny Pavlis. Our band was called JC Rose. They were more rock, we were more progressive. Ric Alba's friend Frank was our drummer, Uncle Dave Hackbarth played keyboards (we had two keyboard players), and Jerry Davis who has been instrumental since in reconnecting us with Ric Alba was on bass. Jim and I shared lead vocals. Most of these connections were just friends of friends and people we met in church, and there really are so many great little side-stories. Boaz and JC Rose played a number of small outreach type things together in parks and stuff like that.

Boaz ultimately decided to venture into punk and new wave and we followed shortly after and in the wake of that evolution, both bands kind of shuffled members. Ric, Danny, Jim and I formed Undercover, Chris went on to form Lifesavers. This was about 1979 or 1980. Jim and I decided we needed a real lead singer so we put an ad in the church bulletin (the church by this time had grown considerably) and after auditioning a number of singers, Bill Walden answered the ad and he completed the lineup. At that time there was only us and Lifesavers, and then shortly after, The Lifters. DA was doing their thing too but we didn't know them and they had already done records so although we worked together later, we were not part of the same sociologies in the very beginning of this movement. There was also a group called Chosen Ones with Danny Pavlis' little brother Chris and Brian Doidge who later went on to play in LSU. They were young and not bad for their age but they only recorded a demo.

I've never really said this before, but Chris Wimber was a big influence on me and I always thought he had more cool. Lifesavers in the very beginning was a better band than we were just in terms of their songwriting, cultural awareness and sensibilities, and ability to carry their audience. They could have been huge, but they had their problems. It took us a little time to come into our own and I always thought Chris deserved the credit for being the real visionary in this genre even though we were contemporaries and our albums came out at exactly the same time. We all had the same idea, to just play the music we loved and write about what was important to us. Chris Brigandi, the leader of The Lifters and later Wild Blue Yonder was also instrumental in things getting off the

ground. He really believed in everything Undercover and Lifesavers were doing, put so much energy into it, set up gigs, helped move equipment, whatever had to be done. He was awesome and also an influence. Ric Alba joining Undercover was also big for us because he's also a great songwriter and musician and he brought so much talent with him.

What were some of the difficulties in being the one of the first alternative bands in the Christian scene?

We weren't thinking that way. Nobody was saying, "Hey, we're one of the first alternative bands in Christian music!" Really, the whole idea of who was the first Christian this or that strikes me as silly. We stood on the shoulders of giants and there are people who stand on ours. At that time the behemoth that was the Christian music industry seemed unattainable to us and none of us thought we really wanted to go down that road anyway. We started playing other venues, lots of night clubs, parties, youth group events, colleges, all kinds of stuff. MRC, a grass-roots division of Maranatha Music, had asked both us and Lifesavers if we would be interested in recording for them, and we both agreed to do so. It was a completely different kind of record deal though, one that was focused on giving bands a product to help generate support. Issues of ownership of masters and copyrights, publishing and creative control were different than other record deals, and this was a great way for both bands to get started. We were not exactly being courted by other labels anyway, at least not yet. I think we took a lot of people and the industry completely by surprise.

I may be wrong about this because I was not brought up in the protestant or evangelical sociology, but the Christian music thing in Southern CA up until then had a set of expectations about how artists were to look, act and communicate on stage. In fact, the very term "artist" was discouraged, and those who were "just artists" were seriously looked-down-on. Well, we weren't interested in doing things that way. We wanted to sound good, be musically interesting, look good, put on a good live show and be genuine, true to who we were and to our audience. I think I've always said that my goal was for the music to stand or fall on its own artistic merit, not just because it conformed to a certain agenda, creed or ideology. Young people responded in ways we could not have imagined.

The practical difficulties for us didn't really seem that difficult. We were reinventing the wheel in some ways, although we weren't thinking that way either. The old wheel was not on our radar screen. We took heat for that, for how we looked and sounded, but none of that mattered to us at all because we were focused and had support from MRC and from Yorba Linda. We had each other. There

were lots and lots of people swirling around this movement as it began and grew. There was really lots of love and energy and excitement. We're lucky to have been part of it. We knew we were on to something and while we made a lot of mistakes, we were focused.

The one truly difficult part for me, probably not what you had intended by your question, was the matter of being part of a movement, a cultural youth revolution, and keeping my personal life put together. We were young and I was already married with two kids when our first album came out. There were just a lot of plates to keep in the air because we still had to work to pay the bills, we had this tiger by the tail, and we were on unfamiliar turf in so many ways. We were being asked questions, good questions that forced me to begin forming points of view. We were traveling and meeting people. The life that Undercover thrust me into was a much larger life than I had structured for my personal self and that transition, important and necessary as it was, took its toll. I tried to shelter my kids as much as I could from any fallout, and there was fallout. Like all good creative stories, it's always a bit of a mess.

When you think back to those days, what are some of the things that come to mind?

When you talk about "those days" I assume you mean the very early days. Kind of picking up with the very early story here, when our first album was just pressed (MRC had very limited distribution, just to a very few, mostly local stores so when the record sold, it was mostly out of the back of our cars) we used to have these parties we called burrito bashes at Ray Hersom's house. Chris Wimber and Clark Edmond also lived there, maybe some other

guys from time to time. Usually after church at Calvary Yorba Linda (which was to become The Vineyard) dozens and dozens of us, kids of all ages, would go to Ray's and we'd play the first Undercover and Lifesaver's albums over and over and dance like crazy. That house was just stuffed to the rafters with people. This is where I remember meeting Brian Healy of DAS and Chris Brigandi.

Those were important and beautiful times for me. I learned so much, about how to make records, how the business worked, how people thought and lived in other parts of the world. It grew me up very fast although in some important ways, I still had yet to grow up even years later. I couldn't possibly begin to synthesize all of the great moments and memories. I remember when I heard the test pressing of the *God Rules* album for the first time and I was so happy with it. I remember that so clearly, listening to it at the MRC offices alone in a side room. I knew we were on to something.

Yes, I had yet to grow up. A number of people, writers and interviewers have said that listening to Undercover was in many ways like growing up with us. That's probably true. Things became unraveled for me around the time of the *Boys & Girls* album in 1984 and that was chronicled on *Branded* in 1986. My marriage was a shambles and I was basically living my own life. All things Undercover were consuming my complete energy. I remember thinking I could not go on living the way I had been living. It was sloppy personally. I called Randy Stonehill who was the only other CCM artist I knew who had been divorced and he was very gracious to me, but told me everything would come undone. He gave me good advice and from there I entered counseling and he was very gracious to me,

but told me everything would come undone. He gave me good advice and from there I entered counseling. It was important to me then that the counselor was a Christian, and I was lucky that the one I chose, recommended to me by Stonehill's pastor, also had the education, state credentials and license. He began chipping away at my rigid fundamentalist thinking, my own emotional immaturity and my distance from my own feelings. I went for a couple years, got through a divorce, and had to figure out where to go from there.

I was determined to go through all of this as responsibly as I possibly could, to stay connected to people at MRC and Calvary, the band and friends. Things did change quite a bit, and I've often thought back on that conversation with Stonehill although I don't know if everything unraveled. In a way, *Branded* was just the beginning, our most successful statement. We were lucky enough to have been part of that youth revolution in the beginning, in the early years, and then with *Branded* we kind of broke new ground again. Again, people responded in ways we could not have imagined. The album was just an open chronicle of what I was thinking and feeling at the time, reconciling what I had always believed and what I had been taught with my experience of the world.

So, I don't know. On a macro level, there's the track things took in my life and how that played out in our music. On other levels, there were so many great moments, concerts, people and adventures all over the place. I still see ripples extending out from those years ago. I don't know that I can be completely objective. I'm still trying to make sense of it. I've always felt as much an observer as a participant in the whole thing. Lots of things come to mind.

Where do you see Undercover's place in music history?

At one level, I think we have no place at all in music history. I teach in the Music department at a university and I can guarantee you that nobody involved in Christian music circles that I know of is being studied in music history classes now, and will not be in the future either. That may sound like a pedantic answer, but I have always strived to be musically genuine and authentic and that probably drove me back to study music years later and that's my reference point when you mention music history. Maybe we have more of a place in religious cultural history. That's a different thing.

I have always refused and rejected the Christian music label, and philosophically still resist it but I cannot deny that this was the sociology we were part of and the infrastructure we worked in, so I will reluctantly use that taxonomy for



Undercover in this question. Christian music is such a small piece of the whole music industry and we are just a small piece of that small piece. My own projection at another level is that we were probably influential to a number of artists, maybe to a movement, maybe to some degree to CCM as an industry. I got an email from Tom Willett who worked at Word Records and was responsible for the What? Records imprint. He told me he got the idea from Undercover, which was very gracious of him to say. This was just within the last few months and I never knew that. In Jerry Wilson's book "God's not Dead" (www.godsnotdeadbook.com) I told the story of Darrel Harris, then president of Star Song records who called me one day to tell me he had heard *Branded* and thought it was a powerful album. That was also very gracious. I have so many such stories and yet I can't be objective about our place or influence. How can I be objective about it? Maybe I flatter myself. Maybe I just need to believe that what we did was worth something. I don't know.

My friend Jon Trott, a writer and fellow Velvet Underground fan correctly pointed out that they probably sold about 1,000 records but that they were all sold to people who then went out and started bands. Maybe we were like that, but to our small piece of that small piece. On the other hand, I know some of the non-religious LA and Orange County bands from that era used to come to our shows and we played with a lot of those bands too so maybe it does go a little beyond our small piece, I don't know.

My sense is that we were inconvenient to the status quo and just tolerated, maybe only barely by that infrastructure, not tolerated at all by other segments, certainly not embraced, and we were ignored for the most part in the CCM machinery. I don't think it was any kind of conspiracy, just that we were not what they were about. I'm talking about the CCM status quo, not our fans and the people we worked with. Undercover was grass roots mostly, scrapping from beginning to end, and we had support from just enough gatekeepers at the right places to do what we did. I do not mean to minimize those people's efforts and faith in what was possible. I realize we were also limited somewhat by our own thinking, our outspokenness and rather extreme style and sometimes our lyrics on our early records. Undercover was always kind of a double-edged sword that way. It was hard at times to know that we may have been blazing some trails and that other bands, friends of ours who may have been more palatable, maybe more orthodox in their lyrics and lifestyles were able to capitalize on that and go on to bigger and better things than we were in both secular and religious sociologies. I am very happy for them and for their success too.

I have been reading through Jerry Wilson's

book because it has many other individual perspectives on that time from members of bands that were active in the early years and the various perspectives help me understand things myself and my own role in everything too. Terry Taylor has a great narrative on the idea of art and Christian music and how it's used by the church for evangelism. It really should be read by anyone interested in this era. He rightly points out that Undercover was the next generation of that, and that DA had tried to escape it with varying degrees of success. That was in the early years though. When Calvary stopped doing their concerts and Maranatha folded up Broken Records, we were just getting ready to record *Branded*. It was hard for us to make a transition from what Terry described and what we had built, to being genuine artists writing from a certain poetic center rather than used simply as a tool by the church for evangelism. I think or hope we were successful in that with *Branded*. It was a different album with a different lyrical approach, introspective more than evangelical, and it marked the end of one era of Undercover, that militant, utilitarian, simplistic era and the beginning of another followed by *Balance of Power* and *Devotion*. As I said earlier, in many ways, and I think the rest of the band might agree with me, things were just getting going with *Branded*.

I also was moved by reading the chapters by Steve Hindalong, Derri Daugherty, and my band mates' chapters, Jim Nicholson, Bill Walden, Sim Wilson and Gary Olson. They all had such beautiful and important perspectives on this time. It dawned on me that things were so crazy, so busy, so full, that I really never had time to explore what others' experiences were like to them. Steve and Derri had such a different purpose than we did and I loved reading about it. The things they went through, their own sets of challenges, feeling like they didn't fit in because they didn't fit the evangelical mold like we did, all impacted me when I read it. I admire their fortitude, commitment and persistence. The members of Undercover also had different points of view on the exact same set of events we all shared together. I felt a little small reading it all. Why did I think I had it all figured out? I am so grateful for the people I know and have shared experiences with, their beautiful hearts and their own inner fires, their own paths and journeys, inquiries, interpretations and the meaning attached to it all. Mine is only one perspective; a valid one, but only one.

So as I said, when we started, there really was no framework for a solely artistic, or rather non-evangelical representation of the Christian life. If you were Christians you were expected

to do things a certain way. Churches were just starting to get over guitars and long hair when we came along swatting the hornet's nest all over again. So in some ways, DA had a hard time transitioning to a band not governed by religious affiliation and so did we. I know The Choir did too and felt awful pressure to be more overt and direct with their lyrics and stage delivery. Others that came along a little later like Adam Again also had challenges, but it was perhaps easier for them because a lot of the work of getting this kind of music accepted by the religious infrastructure had been underway for some time and they could afford to explore nuance a little more. This is only my view, and I don't know if it's completely accurate, just my sense.

The irony is that all these bands started within a Christian sociology. Any of us could have bypassed that altogether from the beginning but chose not to for whatever reasons. Who knows what could have happened or not? Maybe none of us would have ever recorded; maybe some would have broken through. I happen to think the world's a better place having records by these artists where we might not had things gone differently. But starting within the religious sociology and then trying to transition didn't work for any of us. For the secular market we were too religious and for the Christian market we appeared too secular and dealt with controversial topics. That was not a problem



later, and bands have succeeded where we could not have then.

Overall, and in the end, I am happy for my part in all this, bumpy and messy as it may have been along the way, with reading the emails and posts I get from people, to hear that we have made a difference in some peoples' lives in different ways. I am also happy to be making a difference in my students' lives here at the university. I have no doubt many of them will be rock stars in their own fields and go on to way bigger things than I've been part of. I am in touch with many of them already who are doing great work at places like the Warped Tour, The Grammys, all kinds of things.

How do you define Undercover's sound and influence?

It's easier for me to talk about our influences than our sound. We have a unique instrumentation because of the keyboard bass thing. There are other bands who do that, but I don't know that they do it in as energetic or intense, bombastic a context as we do. Jim's guitar is also unique and my approach to the keyboards provides a foundation for him to do what only he can do. All this, the songs themselves and our own ways of hearing what we want to do, and our own unique chemistry with one-another give us our own sound. We've grown and evolved too, like most bands do. There are some songs I don't think we could pull off live at all anymore, not because we couldn't play them but because that's just not the musical space we're in anymore. Of course the keyboard bass thing came about when Ric left Undercover. We had changed drummers and lost Ray after our first album and then Ric too. This left us with four people and we decided to stay trimmed down and try the keyboard bass using B-52s as a model. We had been doing Undercover with 6 people and 4 just seemed to make sense at the time.

I get asked the question about influences and style often, and I realize that there are so many. I can point to some of our songs and tell people, "Oh, this thing right here is a total tip of the hat to Zeppelin," or Black Sabbath or Yes, or X, or The Pixies, Fear, GBH, or Deep Purple, or The Ramones, or Steve Stevens, or The Beatles, or Ultravox, or Rush, or TSOL, or The Cure, or any number of others. Somehow that all gets mashed up along with our own ideas, into the impossibility of who we are. We didn't have any Christian music influences except for Lifesavers in the early days. Later, I think those of us in this immediate Southern CA thing, the artists on Brainstorm, influenced each other. I alluded to that in the small piece on Remembering Gene Eugene in this magazine. There were also times I would explicitly ask myself, "What would Ric Alba do if he were still playing with us," because we like lots of the same music and bass players, stuff like that.

What are your thoughts about Brainstorm and its influence?

Necessity is the mother of invention, and such was the case with Brainstorm. Adam Again, 441 and Undercover were on Blue Collar Records which had gone belly up because of their distributor's default in paying them so we were all without a label. It was Gene's idea to start our own and we talked about it and agreed to approach Maranatha Music and ask about distribution. Maranatha was willing and even agreed to sell Broken Records to us. Our corporate name was Brainstorm Artists International (Gene and our third partner, Barry Hill were both Canadian, and one of our artists was Level Heads, also Canadian) and we initially used Broken Records as the label name.

Undercover's live album from Magic Mountain, 3-28-87 was the initial release. We began to sign other artists. It was almost inconceivable to us that groups like The 77s and DA were without labels and so we eagerly worked with them and I think some of their best releases came out on Brainstorm (we ended up reverting to the name Brainstorm after the sale of Broken fell through). We also signed some groundbreaking rap and hip hop artists, SFC, Dynamic Twins, Freedom of Soul and of course continued to produce Adam Again and Undercover. Those were great years for me, mostly because of the relationships with people like Marie McGilvray who played keyboards for 441 and was our marketing director, all the artists, and Gene and I were pretty tight during those years. I think for the most part, people are much less aware of record labels though, than they are of artists, and so while I think we did good work over those years, it's rightfully the artists and their releases that endure. I was really glad to be part of that too though. As far as Brainstorm's influence, again, I cannot be objective and I'd have to defer to others' opinions. For whatever good may have come out of our work there, I am incredibly grateful.

How did Relative come together for you? What led to wanting to do a solo album?

I think the first seed of a solo release was the influence of technology. The first time I remember ever being exposed to MIDI was around 1984 when we were on the road in Northern CA. We stopped at a music store to get guitar strings or something like that and they had a bunch of MIDI keyboards in the showroom. For those who don't know what that means, basically it allows multiple keyboards to be controlled from one source, either another keyboard, a computer, or a sequencer a hardware device that "remembers" what you play into it and then plays it back on a MIDI instrument. What that meant to me in plain English was that I could play one keyboard but have it control a host of others all connected together by way of MIDI cables. For a keyboard player whose

one hand was tied up 100% of the time on bass and only had one hand left, that was huge. The first album we did using MIDI was *Branded*. Up until then, each layer had to be added manually, one at a time. One free hand meant only one layer. Creatively that kind of opened a door for me and I started playing around with different musical ideas that had not yet been available to me. I remember thinking that Undercover was an extreme band with a unique instrumentation. I was writing songs that were not really meant for Undercover but were still good songs. Some of those ended up on *Relative*.

At another level, in 1987 we were suffering from having been through a really crazy and great seven years since the band had started, with very few breaks. The issues with me getting a divorce, Calvary shutting down its concerts, Maranatha releasing artists from their contracts, constant touring, writing and recording, all had taken their tolls on us. We agreed to stop playing for a while or maybe permanently (in my mind it was never a permanent break). Jim and Sim went off to start Boys Club, and Gene Eugene, Barry Hill and I started Brainstorm in September of 1987. I began work on *Relative* right after I finished mixing 3-28-87. I was eager to get these ideas recorded. I was also eager to work with people whose work I admire like Greg Lawless from Adam Again.

I had bought an Apple IIe computer in 1983 and MIDI sequencing software that I used to "record" the album into the computer. I did it without the benefit of hard drives, which were really expensive and not widely used in the early 1980s. So here I am swapping floppy disks and all, and the software was very rudimentary, but it did allow me to program all the keyboard layers and the bass, and drum parts. I used two digital sampling keyboards plus a rack of analog keyboards for the sounds. It was all driven by the little Apple IIe with no hard drive. All I had to do then was to record guitars and vocals in the studio and then whatever other parts I wanted to add to specific songs like percussion and sax.

I had a battery of great vocalists to work with. Terry Taylor, John MacNamara from 441, Gene and Riki Michele from Adam Again, Dino Elefante, Mike Knott, Crystal Lewis (credited as Skyler), Marie McGilvray, so many talented people. I don't know where the idea to put multiple singers on the album came from. In some ways it would have been fun to do the vocals myself, but I don't think my voice lends itself to those songs' styles and the singers that ended up on those songs are the right ones for the job I think.

Where do you stand now in regards to your faith/belief?

I am sincere and open in my search for truth no matter where it leads. I know there are many who think that doubt and inquiry are wrong if they do not somehow lead back to

the truth of the Bible as they see it. I can't outline my whole process and arguments for what I believe here. But is it really all about correct beliefs? Many think so and I'm certain that to them I am no longer a Christian. To my theologically liberal friends all my questions probably seem like the blinding flash of the obvious. I have had to go through it and I am, of course on a lifelong path but one that has now taken me beyond the idea of the value and potency of correct beliefs and the constructs of Christianity.

On my Facebook page ([facebook.com/ojotaylor](https://www.facebook.com/ojotaylor)) where it asks for religious views, I listed Music, Freethought, and Lovism. To me that means that I value rationalism, I believe in reason unrestrained by deference to religious authority, and I am firmly committed to the cultivation and practice of love. I express this most deeply in music. That's the framework for what I believe.

Again I refer to a discussion I had with Jon Trott who suggested that there are two kinds of knowledge, rational and experiential. The beliefs I held have not stood up well to reason and rational inquiry. I acknowledge and accept the validity of religious experience, although those experiences are unique by definition and cannot be used as a logical defense of any one god or belief system over another. All faiths lay claim to those kinds of experiences. Ultimately, you are going to have to bring that experience into the realm of reason if you want to communicate meaningfully with others.

In the end, the important question is, "What is the basis of what I choose to believe?" I have heard and expect all the arguments because people like to believe that their beliefs stand up to scrutiny. I have been told that mankind is corrupted, fallen, and that we should not rely on our rational minds in spiritual matters, although that is itself an appeal to reason. I have been told that love and a healthy moral code are not possible outside of God, and in fact just the opposite is suggested by research. Many hold that genuine love is not possible outside of Christ, and that somehow only Christians have the truth. I have been told that the secrets and the mysteries belong to God, that we cannot know, and yet I am expected to assent without reason under threat of eternal suffering. I suppose then I am agnostic. I don't know, and outside peoples' individual experiences, nobody else does either. It's necessarily a matter of faith. If one's faith could be proved by reason and logic, it would no longer be faith. I align most closely in the end with Einstein who said, "If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it."

When I talk to people about the early days of

my journey with evangelical Christianity, they often ask if I really believed all that stuff literally. It's a good question. I went forward at an altar call at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in 1976. I began asking questions right away, not borne of skepticism, but thirst. I remember driving to Calvary the first week after that altar call and asking anyone who might have been even standing around in the parking lot what it was supposed to be like to be a born again Christian. I had been brought up Catholic.

Now Calvary in the early days for example, taught that the rapture was going to take place no later than 1988. I heard that taught explicitly, that Hal Lindsey line of thinking that the generation that witnesses the second coming would be the generation (40 years in the bible) that saw Israel become a nation again in 1948. Chuck Smith had written books and tracts on the end times and biblical prophecy. There was a nagging question I had about the way one verse in Matthew 24 was used repeatedly with regard to the end times: "So likewise ye, ... know that it is near, even at the doors." Well, the "... made me curious so I looked up the verse and the missing words, "when ye shall see all these things" seemed important to me. Why omit them? It seemed to argue against the idea of an imminent second coming because the "things" we were supposed to "see" were not at all yet evident. So I asked Chuck personally at a baptism at the ocean. I did not get a good answer and the sense that I had was that I should not be asking the question. To be fair, Chuck was busy with a baptism that day and I was just some kid asking a question, one that he could have possibly interpreted as confrontational, or at least tedious. But that was not my motivation. I wanted to know.

Not having received a good answer led me to explore other explanations and interpretations of the apocalypse and the end times and I stumbled on George Eldon Ladd who had a completely different view than the Lindsey camp, that the end of days and a rapture of the church were not imminent, a view that made much more sense all things considered. I adopted that view quite early which left me at odds with the people at Calvary for whom this was such an important and central issue and I avoided many such discussions. Did I really believe all that, my friends ask?

There were many other such unanswered or poorly-answered questions on crucial matters that I had over those years and coupled together with the decline of my personal life up through our first few albums, my faith necessarily unraveled and changed in many ways. I did feel in the first half of the 1980s like I was "hanging by a thread, out of control," that I had tried so hard and in the end after years of study, worship, church attendance, travel and evangelism, this belief system granted me no more personal power

or sense of transcendence than if I had no belief at all. It was to be then, a matter of complete faith. The rain falls on the believer and the unbeliever alike. I wrote as much on the liner notes to an anthology of our albums in the late 1980s, that I had had to re-evaluate my faith and had chosen to toss out quite a bit of bathwater without losing the baby, those core beliefs of my Christianity. In my disillusionment with evangelicalism, between 1986 and 1990 my entire religious efforts were gradually refocused on Catholicism. I did not accept many of the tenets but had promised to stay open when I made my return to Rome official. Those doctrines seemed no more outlandish to me than many of those I was exposed to in evangelical fundamentalism anyway, and the Catholic Church at least had historical accountability going for it, so I thought. There I remained for the next 15 years.

I moved to the East coast in 2007 to teach at James Madison University. I knew nobody and went there alone. I made the acquaintance of a bright and interesting woman and I asked her out. She was a secular humanist and had learned of Undercover and my role in Christian music. She told me that if I believed she was going to hell and if I was going to try to save her from hell, she would not go out with me. That simple exchange gave me pause and I told her I would consider the question and would get back to her on it. It ended up being a transitional event for me. I had not believed in a fire and brimstone hell in some time, although I did believe in a kind of hell, an eternal separation made of our own choice to turn away from God here on earth. Did I really believe all that?

This had lurked in the background, all of these many mental exercises, contrivances and convolutions one must necessarily go through to reconcile the Bible with itself, with history, with orthodoxy, with what we know from science and archeology, with our own experience. I had to admit to myself that my own mental exercises, convenient as they might have been, as orthodox as some of them could be considered, were not at all what the historical church, the early church fathers, or the bible taught even though I had long since abandoned the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. I told her I did not believe in a future reconciliation of the cosmic sin ledgers or a fiery hell and that I would not try to save her from one, although if objective discovery of such a place ever happened, I would make her aware of it and would in fact try to save her from it. I said so half-joking, but she was serious about this, and I told her that the bottom line was that my idea of hell was only my own, that I didn't know for certain, but that I didn't believe in a lake of fire. So we talked this kind of thing over, faith and belief, for hours.

The floodgates of inquiry were now open, and in the three years since, I have done an

intense amount of reading and have opened myself up to any reasonable question and have demanded adequate answers in exchange. It seems the only responsible thing to do. I have the time to devote to it because I am on the East coast to teach and have very few other obligations there. Once one accepts the validity of scripture as a sacred document it may make sense to have discussions about theological matters, the finer points of doctrine and practice. I watched the documentary "Frisbee" recently and a friend of Lonnie's in the film said that he had never read the bible before and once he had, it opened a whole new world to him. If the Bible is approached like that, it makes sense to have those kinds of discussions.

For the last three years though, I have been in the crawlspaces of inquiry, examining the foundations, backfill, the joists and girders. I read the new atheists, skeptics, scholars of many disciplines, artists, mystics, pastors and theologians, conservative, liberal, and mainstream. Bart T. Ehrman, New Testament scholar and Chair of Religious Studies at University of North Carolina was particularly powerful. At that level the questions take on an entirely different nature. I never knew, for example that there is no archeological evidence at all for the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Millions of people wandering a small patch of desert for 40 years, and there is not a trace of evidence. Why, if there was a worldwide flood with all remaining life on an ark, are there no kangaroo remains between Ararat and Australia, or penguin fossils between Turkey and Antarctica? I never knew that many of the New Testament epistles are pseudonymous, in some cases outright forgeries (not necessarily motivated by malice, but pseudonymous nonetheless), and that we know a good deal about the fascinating origin and evolution of the scriptures, the thousands of manuscripts available, no two of which agree completely, their selection and compilation into the canon in the fourth century, and the early church apocryphal writings that also show what early Christians believed and practiced. This is all well-known by biblical scholars, and anyone who is serious about their practice should know this stuff. These are just some examples of problems for literalists who rarely think through such things because they are like the guy in the documentary who have gone in with the assumption that it should all be taken at face value. Did I really believe all that?

To the believer, it will sound as if I am cut off, down a bunny trail of error and blindness, a heretic, apostate. I feel no such thing. Things make much more sense to me, I am more alive, I feel more connected, I am not worried nor do I fear. I am incredibly grateful to the forces responsible for my existence. No god I am interested in knowing would begrudge an honest and sincere inquiry, honoring the only faculties I was born with. I assume

responsibility for it. I know love more than I ever have. I have grown. I am more complete in every way. I have ongoing discussion about all this and my ongoing process on Facebook, and I invite anyone to sit in and continue to grow with me, just as it was with listening to Undercover.

What are your views on Christianity these days?

That's such a broad question. First, there is no unified or singular "Christianity" that I can really offer a view on. Even within mainstream orthodox Christianity there is so much division and disagreement over so many critically important issues of eternal consequence. That alone is telling. Perhaps we should not have such strong views on things we don't understand. Also very sad is the politicization of faith. That is not unique to Christianity but it's rampant within it.

I have two cousins who are retired missionary nuns in the Maryknoll order. They have been instrumental in my growth over the years. I remember talking to one of them around 1990 about the afterlife and she told me she didn't believe anyone was going to hell. I was surprised and asked if she meant "anyone" like even Hitler? She reaffirmed her answer. Her view of course is way outside the mainstream of Catholic teaching but it was obvious she had thought the issue through and I just hid the conversation away in my mind. Sometime later I was in the rectory at a nearby Catholic Church (also Tommy LaSorda's church) that was pastored by Augustinian priests, a conservative order. They still wear self-flagellating belts around their waists although I hope they don't still use them. I had mentioned my cousins to the pastor whose face went a bit white and told me "Well, you know there are many who consider the Maryknolls somewhat on the fringe of Catholicism, maybe not really Catholic at all." There is this fixation with correct beliefs, and allowing for certain tolerances, anyone outside those correct beliefs is deemed "on the fringes" or outside the camp altogether, and that has very real daily consequences for how people are treated. That can't be right.

I've experienced a real contrast of practices lately. I've been playing guitar for the Dances of Universal Peace. It is an interfaith practice of simple circle-dances with musicians in the center. They were begun by Samuel Lewis, "guru to the hippies," in San Francisco in the 1960s. A little research will show a number of connections between Lewis and Eastern teachers but again, the point is not dogma or correct beliefs. There is no belief system and no religious affiliation with the Dances, so there is really nothing to belong to. The point is practice, to come together as a people from many spiritual traditions or no tradition at all. It is a practice of renewal and meditation to promote peace, understanding and

connection within ourselves and each other through song and movement. I have learned quite a bit about other peoples' practices this way. This might scare some of the "correct belief" folks away, but even the secular medical and behavioral sciences advocate meditation, breathing practices, relaxation, movement, chant (even the early church), all good for us in a number of ways. Christianity can be overly cerebral. Some sects integrate more activity in the way of practice, but more often in evangelicalism the service is focused on a person and the sermon, usually after the singing of hymns, perhaps prayer, which too often looks and sounds like begging God for favor. I'm not sure about the practice in that kind of model. I don't mean this as a criticism at all. The difference in practices and the results are just things I find interesting and noteworthy.

I don't think that religion or faith are necessary for us to become complete human beings, to love, to have a strong and pure sense of morals and ethics. Religion and faith can do a lot of harm. I am told they can do a lot of good too, although I think it's also possible that the good could just as easily be done outside religion. But good is good, love is love, and wherever it comes from is fine with me. It's just that love and good so often have to take this long detour through doctrine, dogma, speculation, mental exercises, contrivances and convolutions before it gets to love. I am inclined toward complete acceptance and respect of others' beliefs. On the other hand over 40% of Americans believe the world was created in 6 days just a few thousand years ago and many of them want to run for public office, rewrite science and history textbooks (as was recently the case in Texas), establish a state religion and enforce a moral code that has no basis in reason but is solely justified because it exists in ancient manuscripts, and in such cases I have a hard time standing by silently or passively.

I don't believe I will ever be reunited with my mother in heaven. My heart is broken by that loss of hope. We need to love now. We need to live now, fully. We are not going to be rescued someday from the pain and suffering of life here and now. We need to be that rescue, love, to those in pain. Some see this as meaningless. I see it as urgent. There is no reason why the loss of hope, or the absence of meaning or purpose should require the existence of a transcendent belief system. I accept the practices of those singularly committed to love.

I've been asked how I reconcile my years in Undercover with my own beliefs and practices now. Was it all a waste? Am I just throwing all that away? What of all the people who listened to us and whose lives were changed in such powerful ways? How can I stand on a stage and play those songs still? These are all good questions. I feel very fortunate to have

been in Undercover, to have owned Brainstorm, to have been invited to be part of so many people's lives, to have been changed by them as they were by us, to have been a catalyst in any way for good. The message in the early days was one of "salvation" through Jesus only. I've many times expressed how we were young and the message necessarily simple and simplistic for a church not quite ready to go to the cultural or metaphysical edges. They were also representative of our own growth. I own that and assume responsibility for it. From *Branded* on, our message was one of self-forgiveness, acceptance and forgiveness of others, tolerance, kindness, wonder, love, all it means to be a complete human being. I was not then at the point where I believed any of that was comprehensively possible outside of Christianity. I know it is now, and that it's not important what container love comes in.

I know that DAS and Undercover are in the studio - can you tell me what the plans are with Undercover and what you guys are working on? Will it be a full length with a regular release, just as a download, etc.?

The only studio work Undercover has been doing has been recording single songs and we've had no plans to release anything. The one song that we've been working on lately is a song Gym wrote in the 1980s called "I Love You" and recorded for his band Boys Club around 1988 or so. I always liked parts of the song so one afternoon a couple of years ago I took the parts I liked and rewrote the other parts, changed the character of the song a bit, then Gym and I re-recorded it in a couple weekends with Rob Gallas singing. Since then we've had Ric Alba play bass on it, and I hope to get Sim's vocal on it before this summer is out. A rough version of it is posted on my MySpace page. Other than that we have no plans for Undercover recording although we do have some pretty solid plans for some concerts over the next year, which is always great and lots of fun. I am working on another batch of material for myself and I don't know how that will be released yet. I'm going to be doing most of the performing and the vocals myself on those songs although I can't really call it a follow-up to *Relative* either. It's substantially edgier.

What is your involvement with DAS?

Brian's been a great friend for many years. I helped him on his very first record by co-writing some of the songs and programming a good number of them too. On his later records he worked with other people and I think he is probably the best person to talk about all that. We reconnected lately and he told me about his idea for a cover song (I think I'm sworn to secrecy on the details). His idea was to get me and Gym involved and Riki Michele from Adam Again. I told him I was also in touch with Ric Alba again and Brian was thrilled to include Ric on it too. We

recorded that in December. He also had a demo with a full album's worth of material that he gave us and we all agreed it would be a great project to work on so we're kind of right in the middle of arranging and recording all those songs too with the same lineup except that now Steve Hindalong has agreed to play drums which I think is brilliant. Derri Daugherty is slated to mix it all down when we're done tinkering.

What are you playing on the new DAS, and how would you define the sound?

I'm playing keyboards for the most part, but I'm also kind of the keeper of the studio sessions and files, and engineering most of the recording right now. We're all involved in fine-tuning the arrangements, but it's Brian's project and he did a fabulous job of writing the material and largely arranging it himself. He's been open to everyone's ideas and it's a very free and collaborative environment.

Brian Healy again always says he is the weakest link in the band: 1) Is that true? and 2) What does Brian do? Artistically what does Brian bring to the DAS party?

He says that a lot around us too. I think he means he is the weakest link musically, meaning he probably has the least amount of formal music theory knowledge and experience and he's probably right in that way. But he is the visionary behind DAS and there's no doubt about that. In that sense, he's not only not the weakest link, he's the only link! He has a vision for DAS, the only vision really, which is as it should be. He writes the songs using a combination of found materials, loops, writes his own lyrics and melodies, and he has ideas about how the recorded parts should sound. So he doesn't have the book-smarts musically? I think that always helps, but DAS is the manifestation of an artistic vision and that's what he brings to the party. The rest of us are only accomplices.

Can you also tell me a bit about what your teaching job is and what that entails?

I had been educating myself along the way of my life for a number of reasons. Personal growth was a furious driver at first, my own intellectual curiosity, and then there was the fact that I had kids and didn't feel very employable if the bottom ever dropped out musically. After my first graduate degree in business from UCLA I got out of Christian music and just focused on raising my kids but I soon began studying music formally again and ended up with another master's degree, this one from CSU Fullerton in music theory and composition. That was a great journey because I had no undergraduate music degree so I had to make up a bunch of classes and prerequisites before I could even consider getting into the graduate program in music. That wasn't my objective though. I only studied for the love of music and

wanted to take every class I could anyway and just ended up with the units. Also, I was older than most students and I already had a full-blown music career in my rearview mirror so that made it a very rich experience for me and I became very good friends with a number of my teachers including Lloyd Rodgers (www.lloydrogers.com) with whom I studied composition, and John Koegel, a brilliant musicologist.

Towards the end of the program I started wondering what the combination of my degrees might be useful for in the real world. With about a year left to go, Dr. Koegel asked me if I'd be interested in teaching a class called The Business of Music and I agreed to do it. CSU Fullerton had the class in its catalog but had not offered it for some years and here I was with the right combination of education and experience to teach it. I never thought of myself in that role before but I loved it. Just before my graduation Dr. Koegel came to me with a job opening for assistant professor of Music Industry Studies in the Music department at James Madison University in Virginia. I prepared a CV, sent it off, and it turned out to be a very good fit for both parties. I finished the MM in June 2007 and was in Virginia teaching 2 months later. I've made some very good friends in the music department there including the coordinator of the Music Industry program, Dr. David Cottrell, an Emmy-winning composer.

I teach Artist Management, Marketing of Recorded Music, Entrepreneurship in the Music Industry, Legal Aspects of the Music Industry, Music Publishing, a yearlong track in Songwriting, and History of Rock. I love the job mostly because I love the students, have something unique to offer them, and I have the opportunity to make a big difference in their lives as they go out to conquer their own worlds, which they will. I love the university too because there is the expectation that the faculty will stay active creatively, professionally, intellectually, and in ongoing service to the community and the students. I have to pinch myself sometimes when I realize that I also get paid for it.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/ojotaylor>

<http://www.myspace.com/ojotaylor>

<http://undercover.medelle.com/>

<http://brainstormartistsint.tripod.com/>

(a great tribute site to a missed label)



441:

The 80's were a lifetime ago for all of us...



Interview by Matt Crosslin

I can't claim to have been a huge 441 fan since their first album. They were pretty much gone from the whole music scene when I was first discovering "Christian" music. When I did get a chance to hear them (via a really bad mp3 bootleg rip of their second album), I was impressed by the quality of music and honesty of the lyrics under the mp3 digi-stortion. I can now say that I own all of their albums and count them as one of the better bands I own. As a band, 441 has been through their ups and downs the past few years – including member Glenn Holland being diagnosed with cancer right before their reunion concert (more details about that can be found in Jerry Wilson's excellent book *God's Not Dead* at godshotdeadbook.com). They have also seen the uglier sides of the music industry up close through the years. Through it all, the members of 441 seemed to emerge with their faith and drive to play music both intact – a somewhat rare combination in the CCM world of old. Glenn and John Giali took some time out of busy lives to discuss a wide range of topics with me. I fully enjoyed the depth of what they had to say – you might have to read this interview more than a few times to take it all in.

The first things fans probably want to know is, how is your health now Glenn? Any updates?

Glenn Holland: Thanks for asking. I'm healthy and have had no signs of cancer since my original diagnosis in 2005. I go in periodically for tests and the 'magical' 5 year mark is August. I feel very lucky and blessed. There are so many people who get a raw deal in life and life has been good for me.

The CD transfers of the 441 album and *Mourning Into Dancing* are really clean. What was the process to get those on CD?

GH: That is thanks to our guitarist and audio expert John Giali. When Blue Collar folded, Harry Barnes was gracious enough to give us the masters to MID.

John Giali: We were fortunate to have possession of the original 2 track mix masters, but ½" 30 ips tape isn't a format I could accommodate in my project studio. I had a connection at the famed Village Recorders in Los Angeles where I was able to make a direct transfer to DAT about 15 years ago, a format that enabled me to get it into my computer to re-master for CD.

For people (like me) who are newer fans, where does the song "Ronnie" on the S/T re-issue come from?

GH: That is a song written by John Giali back when 441 was new but it didn't make it onto our debut album.

-JG: Yeah, the song was recorded during the sessions for the first album, but was actually written just prior to the formation of 441. John Mac and I had kind of a short-lived friendly songwriting rivalry going on around that time and "Ronnie" was my response to a new song of his, "Mom And Dad." It was often part of our live set in the early days, and occasionally still gets asked about, so we decided to include it as a bonus track when the album was re-mastered for CD.

We have already discussed this, but for those out there that might be wondering - will there also be a CD re-issue of *Sacrifice*?

GH: I doubt it, but it can be had in digital form through iTunes, Rhapsody, etc. You can find more info on our website, [.com](http://www.441.com).

Did 441 ever face any controversies in the Christian music scene?

GH: Controversies? One time Steve got caught drinking a margarita at a restaurant by some friends of the band who happened to be fervent Christians. They were really offended. What I was offended about is that it was a *strawberry* margarita. In the end everyone survived with their salvation intact. I think.

I remember we played "I Feel Fine" by the Beatles at a gig once and a guy (yes, fervent

Christian) got really upset. I hope he's gotten over that by now.

Jimmy Swaggert railed on us in one of his books (along with a bunch of other bands). I think we were playing the devil's music or something - much worse than visiting prostitutes, I'm sure.

That's about as close to controversy as we got.

If I can be serious for a moment, it's incidents like these that can give people the perception that some Christians are closer to the Taliban than is comfortable for them. We don't need no Christian Taliban. The way to avoid that is to focus on love, forgiveness, art, music and the many things that God have given us to be joyful about. You don't hear about the hot new Taliban Heavy Metal band, the Taliban Symphony Orchestra or the great painting one of the Taliban leaders produced. No, they're in a cave somewhere figuring out how to oppress women and program young boys to blow themselves up. They're so obsessed with their narrow view of how everyone should live that the richness of life has been squeezed out. All because they think that's what God wants them to do. In these crazy times, maybe the world needs to see Christians embrace that richness, the love, the grace.

This became very real for me when my first marriage was ending. I had more than one close friend - all "serious" Christians (ultimately, much too serious for me) - cut off all communication with me because of my situation. What was next, public stoning? I needed my friends more than at any time in my life and basically if I didn't do exactly what they said, that was it. One friend I never talked to again. That was 17 years ago. The "secular" world doesn't do that, do they? So was I to conclude that Christians are less loving and less forgiving than non-Christians? That was certainly the reality for me.

I'd like to think 441 has been able to convey that life has those rich things to offer, that there's grace and it comes from something way bigger than us.

Tell us a bit about the set list for the Broken Reunion. Why were those songs chosen? Did the whole set make it on to the CD?

GH: The band had a 30 minute set, so we needed to play a selection that best represented what 441 was about. We've started concerts off with "Looking at You" and "Jordan" for years, and that combination really starts the show off with energy. Since we were the opening act, it was important to do just that. Beyond that, it's a process of crafting the set for the right intensity, emotion and song recognition. "In The Night," although intense, is a fine rocker. So it went third.

"Break Out" was our most popular song by virtue of it being number one on the radio in L.A. back in the 80s. Usually, that means a song is going to go near the end but I think we started feeling as a band that we had more to convey later in the show than the relative bouncy-lightness of "Break Out." But to do that, we had to have confidence in our material that it could sustain the rest of the set. I mean, what if you went to a Modern English show and they played "Melt with You" fourth in their set? You'd probably go get a beer after that, right?

Now, I'm not saying we have stronger material than Modern English, just that 441 had stronger material than "Break Out." So, following "Break Out" with "Fish on the Car" kept that momentum going because it's a very recognizable tune right from the beginning. In fact, you can hear people just after the end of "Break Out" yell for "Fish on the Car." So once Ronnie (Martin, of Joy Electric) hits those first notes of Fish the crowd really reacted. That's why you play music in the first place. It's a great feeling.

From there, it was about taking the crowd through some different emotions: joy through trial ("Mourning Into Dancing"), anguish and doubt ("Is It Enough") and then full out love and praise ("In His Presence").

The band did a great job. Steve Giali was flawless on drums. That was crucial for the CD. Typically a band uses several nights to compile a live recording. We had one shot. Some things can be fixed after the fact but drums aren't one of them.

Having some high caliber musicians come through for us with Joe Medrano on bass in my absence and Ronnie on keys along with John and John's experience surely made it a great show.

The entire set is on the CD and in the order I just described. Obviously, we edited out some of the breaks and talking in between songs - it's nice for those in the audience but especially now with mp3s lots of talking just doesn't work very well in a recorded product. We kept one snippet where John McNamara introduces "Is It Enough" and explains that I'm not there.

JG: Given the short allotment of time for our portion of the show, we were fairly unanimous with what songs we wanted to play. I'm reminded though that initially "Fish on the Car" wasn't in the set. But Ronnie and Joe insisted during a rehearsal that it wouldn't be a real 441 concert if we didn't play it. So far, no one has seemed to notice though that we cut the third verse to make room for it.

What is the history of the two new songs? Were they older songs just now recorded, or written recently? What was it like recording songs at a distance?

GH: 441 had discussed doing an entire new album in recent years. I had started writing songs again and quickly compiled enough for a record. As well, John McNamara had several he had written over the years.

Ultimately, the fact that I now live in Texas combined with the daily rigors of our current lives made that a difficult proposition. When Beth graciously gave us access to the recordings of the Broken concert it allowed us the opportunity to do something. Adding a few new songs onto the project was something that was good for everyone. People who dug what 441 was 25 years ago could hear something new. The band could participate in a creative session with one another again. For me, it was therapeutic to contribute material to the project since I didn't perform at the concert.

"Inside Me" is a song I wrote around 2006 when I had started writing for a possible new 441 record. This song came out easy. When I write, I usually just start playing my acoustic and humming and mumbling. It's songwriting via speaking in tongues.

The topic of "Inside Me" is fairly simple, yet a very personal one for me. I'm probably not the only person on the planet who has trouble in relationships and who has a darker side that's not too far from the surface. Letting someone "in" is scary. You worry that they will take one look and walk back out or, worse, make themselves at home and trash the place.

Whether you're relating to God or a human, once that person starts to see things you didn't intend to reveal it can be distressing or liberating. Or both.

I tried to capture those different reactions with the three major parts of the song. A little anger or fear, some tenderness and humility. I had the song pretty well arranged out but bringing it to the band always adds more flavor.

"Rain Fall Down" is a song John McNamara wrote in the early 90s. 441 had re-formed and were playing assorted shows around '91-'93. We played that song in a show we played in 1993, the last show before we played in 2005. I had a recording of the performance. We took that arrangement and made some tweaks - like the guitar intro and a new bridge.

What was really fun was working with John Giali and a close friend of mine, Tony DeNeri, on guitar. Tony and I played in a cover band in L.A. before I moved and he's a great guy and an excellent player. Seeing John and Tony working together was really nice and they collectively came up with some tasteful parts for the songs.

It also allowed us to work with Ronnie and Jason Martin. Jason engineered most of the tracks for the new tunes and Ronnie has been helping us for a few years now. They're great people and it was fun to be around them. Jason reminds me a bit of Gene Eugene, but don't tell him that.

As for logistics, I had done demos of both songs and solicited feedback from the guys. I then flew out for a weekend and we tracked drums, guitar, lead vocal and bass at Jason's studio. I took the tracks back to Texas and added some stuff. We ended up going through quite a few revisions on "Rain Fall Down," especially for the guitar intro. John and Tony finally nailed that one evening at John's house and sent me the tracks.

Working remotely is certainly possible, but it wasn't easy. Once I had all the tracks, I mixed it in my home studio. John G. did a lot of post-production work and the two of us collaborated via email, phone and file transfers.

It was a fun process, but it took time. I love creating and it was nice to have such oversight and latitude on a project.

JG: Glenn really did have a slew of great new songs and easily enough for a full length studio release. All of them could have and *should have* been recorded but we picked a couple songs, "Inside Me" and "Rain Fall Down," to experiment with the feasibility of us using a remote approach. We're all pretty pleased with the result, but in the end just finding the time to devote to it proved the most difficult part about it.

What are all the members of 4-4-1 currently up to?

GH: The other three guys still live in SoCal.

Nobody's perfect, I guess. John G. works in audio and video production. Steve's a salesman and is still selling. John M. owns his own environmental engineering firm. I think all are involved in music in church in some fashion. I work in the technology/software arena in Dallas and have a local cover band to keep me busy in my off time.

Glenn, could you tell us a bit more about your side band? Any plans to record?

GH: The Blind is a band I formed with a couple of new friends out here in Dallas. Jamie Woodson was in Room Full of Walters and Ryan Brandon is a great young drummer I met in the church band we were both in. Right now we're a cover band. We play mostly 80s rock – Journey, Billy Idol, Prince, that sort of stuff. But, Jamie and I are both songwriters and both have songs. Our plan was to build a following with other people's material and then start breaking our own in. How can that plan fail? Jamie and I both like power-pop type stuff so it will be interesting to see how we can work together.

Has anyone in 441 ever thought about solo albums? Also, to cover the obvious fan question - are there any older demos or unfinished songs that could be put together to make fan-club type release?

GH: McNamara would be the most likely choice for a solo record, since he can sing and write. I know the Elefantes were making noises about luring into a project after *MID* was finished but obviously nothing came of that.

Now that I've got better technical tools to work with, I've thought of a solo project but I still conclude that I probably don't have enough to contribute on my own to make something really special. I'd rather

collaborate with people where we can be more than the sum of parts. Plus, who would buy "Glenn Holland"?? Not sure there's a market for that.

On 441 demos and the like, there is material out there, but they're where they are for a reason. I'm not sure we'd want to release any of those.

What I'd be more inclined to do are one-off new songs or perhaps alternate versions of existing songs. I've got a song written that could be a nice 441 song. Re-doing "Pray For Rain" from the *Sacrifice* album would be nice. The Gialis didn't play on the original and I'd love to have the 'real' 441 give it a try. I have a slow, dreamy version of "Rain Fall Down" that would be interesting to produce.

So, there are possibilities. Time, money and geography are the obstacles.

Are there any future plans for 4-4-1?

GH: No plans. It'd be great to play again, if the situation presented itself.

HM placed *Mourning Into Dancing* at # 62 in their Top 100 Christian Rock Albums of All Time list. Any thoughts about this? I guess they are, in a sense, voting this as your best album as a band. Would you agree? What do you think of the musical comparisons they made between 441 and Duran Duran, Simple Minds, and Paul Young?

JG: Well, we were listening to bands like Simple Minds and Duran Duran back then, and I suppose dreamy is better than nightmare-ish. For my money, *MID* has always been my favorite, but it seems I'm always running into people who actually like the first album best. But who are we to argue ... we made it onto somebody's top 100 list!

GH: Yes, I think *Mourning Into Dancing* was our best record. The songwriting was consistent, the production was solid and it sounded great. It still sounds great. It dates itself a bit as it is very much an 80s – sounding record, but I'm fine with that. *441* has a lot of neat moments. *MID* really could stand up against anything else out there. Of course, being mentioned on any list in 2010 is great. Just that people remember means a lot.

What are your thoughts on the current state of the music industry? How has digital music changed things?

GH: It's truly the best of times and the worst of times. Music is so easy to produce now that the rare talented artist cannot be found amid the din of hundreds of thousands of mundane-to-dreadful pretenders.



441 in an irreverent pose. Credit: Kim Loy.

Do you remember the Pixar movie *The Incredibles*? During one scene, Syndrome is monologuing about selling all his cool inventions so everyone can be a superhero. And he says, "because when everyone is super, no one will be." That's a great line and I love the statement it makes on modern-day society.

Well, it's applicable to music today. The crappiest band in the world can make a record and put it on iTunes. 441 is on iTunes, Rhapsody, Napster, Amazon. We have distribution now that we've never had before. Do we deserve to be on iTunes? I'd like to say yes, but the same manner in which we got that distribution any other person can get their music on those stores – it had nothing to do with merit, development or recognition.

As a music listener you have tremendous choice. Nearly infinite choices. Practically, it's impossible to find the diamonds in the rough. No matter how easy it is for us to bash record companies - and God knows they deserve it - they served a purpose: to find that raw material and finish them into an artist. Who does that now? You can argue that the machine did a pretty good job delivering to us artists we should be hearing. Elvis, Beatles, Stones, Zeppelin, Van Halen, Michael Jackson, Prince, Paul Simon, U2.

I just don't know if it's possible to do that anymore. Who do we now depend on to weed through an endless number of "artists" so as consumers we have an idea of who to listen to? Even if there's a site or a music critic that has some value, the machinery to take raw talent and hone them isn't there. Developing an artist is nearly impossible for record companies. Their revenue streams are eroding and the business environment dictates an artist become profitable yesterday.

As for the quality of the top artists, I'm not sure that could be worse. Billboard's Band of the Decade (for 2000-2009) was Nickelback. God help us all. Go look at the Hot 100 charts. If you don't have a song "featuring" somebody, forget it. If you're not a Hip-Hop/Hitmaker or Country fan, you're out of luck.

Any world where Creed is making a comeback has to make one wonder if better times are behind us.

Sure, there are some good acts out there, but the music world is so dominated by the modern urban sound that the little slice of pie us rock/band-based fans want is gobbled up by John Mayer, Coldplay and Nickelback.

When you combine that with the still-rampant theft of music by millions of us there's just not enough money in the business for good bands

to be nurtured and flourish. Anyone who happens to be reading this who regularly gets music for free needs to understand they are drying up the well that serves their musical thirst and they need to stop. Buy the songs. If you like something, tell your friends to buy it. Anything else is stealing.

You speak about people stealing music, and I would agree people need to stop. I have also wondered if maybe the music industry didn't help that happen more than they want to admit. They always push people to only care about the newest hottest music. I wonder if people got so hooked on having something new, that they latched on to stealing as a means to fulfill that desire that the music industry encouraged in the first place? I believe that you have to hold people accountable for their actions, but do you think that maybe the companies might have been also planting the seeds of their own destruction all along?

GH: That's a good point. I think the industry/labels surely made their own bed in the way they reacted to Napster, etc. They reacted like they could control it, which was a huge strategic mistake. Did they think the internet and digital music was a fad that would blow over, like Disco? This is not an easy problem to solve, to be sure. But they got it wrong from square one.

Bottom line, people steal music because they can get away with it. I've done it and 95+ percent of the people reading this have also. Most of it is done because people can get something for free without anyone knowing and it's easy to rationalize.

However, a lot of us have downloaded or shared music because it's too hard to get the music we want using "their" channels. Once we had the world at our fingertips in the comfort of our own house with the internet, the idea of driving all over town only to be forced to buy a \$16 CD full of songs we've never heard and that were likely terrible – just for that one song - was untenable. Just search your favorite peer-to-peer client instead and you're listening to that cool song in 10 minutes. Fast and free.

If record companies had a vision of "fast and cheap" ten years ago they would likely be in a much different spot now.

The fact that they didn't even seem to recognize the entire world was changing was astounding.

Some people have begun to declare that the old Christian music scene was a mistake that "God never wanted." Some seem to wish we could restore it to what it was. Looking back on it, what do you think about the scene in hindsight?

JG: Personally I wouldn't want to qualify the scene as whole like that, but back in our day we weren't hearing a lot of "Christian" music suited to our taste. It's been interesting

to have heard comments this many years later from fans who say something like, "441 didn't sound like a 'Christian band'" and we take that to mean there was a community out there that felt unsatisfied, as we were, with what was being offered at the time. So we were delighted to come across the alternative scene springing up in Orange County that "scratched that itch" so-to-speak for many of us. Music is an art, and people's tastes are going to vary whether in the church or out. Fortunately it's a different day and there are a lot more choices for Christians today with respect to musical genres. I, for one, think that's a good thing.

But again, I really believe it comes down to nothing more than personal taste. I was leading a worship team at my church, and on the occasions when my team played on a Sunday morning there was a sweet elderly lady, probably in her late 80's or early 90's, that would go out of her way to come thank me for the worship songs we sang (usually a mixture of rocking Lincoln Brewster and Chris Tomlin tunes with softer Hillsong inspirational stuff.) As I thanked her I would ask if she thought it got too loud, and she would enthusiastically respond, oh no! By contrast, there was another lady, who had to be decades younger in age, who routinely requested I play traditional hymns. Go figure. I really think this whole rock music and the church argument is tired. Move along people.

GH: How would those people know what God wants? Burning bush? However, I know a lot of humans - in and out of the industry – who didn't want.

Here's a little story: Just after we had our first successes, two of my closest friends outside of the band told me they weren't sure God endorsed or approved what we were doing as a valid form of ministry. Frankly, I didn't personally push the conventional "ministry" thing as a core facet of 441 – I had a different approach. But the beard-stroking hubris, the pride that comes from people in my story or the ones who say God never wanted something is incredible. Not only incredible. Distasteful and offensive.

Regardless of what God (or my friends) thought, stakeholders were trying to manipulate what was happening to fit their plans, preconceptions or prejudices. If you have an entire operation built to make Russ Taff or Carmen successful, why would you want to retool for Adam Again?

It even happened from within. We were asked to put more references to God in our songs. We thought there were just the right number of references to God. But sometimes you have to play the game. "Add a 'Jesus' and we get to do a record? Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!"

It's what we humans do – mess things up to suit our own needs.

As for thoughts on the 'scene', John hit it on the head above. Shortly after I became a Christian (at 17) my also-newly-minted-Christian friends (ironically, the same ones I mentioned above) took me to one of those Disneyland or Knott's Christian music nights. It was terrible. At the time I was listening to KROQ in LA – Talking Heads, early U2, Violent Femmes, Gang of Four, the Clash. I had already been a fan of the Police and Joe Jackson for three years or so. I heard nothing even close to that at Celebration Praise '81 or whatever it was called.

That experience motivated me to learn music and try to do it better – sort of a 'put up or shut up' – and 441 was born within three years of that moment and not long after we were playing Knott's Berry Farm.

Of course, we weren't the only or the first. Right when I was getting good enough at bass to start thinking about playing in a band I went to Calvary Chapel and saw Undercover and The Lifters and was blown away. John and I also ran sound one night for a band named Jonny Kat at a local church. The music and energy these bands brought was appealing and infectious. It totally energized us – as it did thousands and thousands of others.

Those were great times and nothing can be restored to its original state. They now say dinosaurs are the ancestors of birds. Now, Switchfoot, Relient K and Hillsong are successors of Undercover, Altar Boys, Lifesavers and The Choir. And The Edge is the Godfather of every worship band guitarist on the planet.

However – and this is not any commentary on the groups mentioned above – the vast majority Christian music STILL "sounds Christian". You know, that certain way the guy sings... is just like the other guy, and the other guy, and the other guy... and there's something about it that just seems fake or contrived to me. I heard it as a 17 year old and I still hear it. I'm completely uninterested. Aside from some of our brethren back in the day, I've not one Christian album in my collection. Not that I'm saying it isn't good for other people – a lot of people enjoy that music. It's just not for me. And I know it's not for a great, great many other people.

Go listen to "I Want You" on Abbey Road when John overloads the mic preamp with his scream. Raw, honest, authentic. Listen to "Love's Irony" on the 441 rerelease. There's a guy who's still hurting from a lost love. It's intense. Whether it's a scream or a whisper, people want to relate, to feel, to think. That's what the bands in that scene were trying to do. That approach ultimately didn't fit into the plans of the people who had the most power.

As for our part, it was fun and exciting. And it did touch people. We still have people write to us to let us know that. That is just amazing and I feel honored to have been a part of something that positively influenced someone else.

So, is it safe to say that all of the members of 4-4-1 still consider themselves Christians? We have covered many different people from older Christian bands that are all over the place with their beliefs now, so it is always interesting to see where people have been on their journeys, no matter where they are now. How would you describe your journey from when you were in the band until now?

JG: Of course the 80's were a lifetime ago for all of us, but yeah I think it's safe to say our faith has remained intact. As Glenn mentioned, we're all involved one way or another in our respective churches. But like Hebrews 12:1 says it takes endurance to run the marathon that is the Christian faith.

GH: It's true that some of the figures from back then are in radically different places now. Some stories make me a little sad. Many of us saw an underbelly of the church by virtue of our access that affected our own beliefs and practices.

Personally, I've experienced things that make it difficult for me to trust someone who talks a certain talk.

I've always been the guy on the outside and I've accepted – even embraced – that destiny. My role now is to help my daughters grow into grounded, loving, caring individuals. I like to talk about God with them and encourage their curiosity. But, I will also protect them from many of the "Christian" things that affected me.

The best thing from this arc of 441 has been my relationship with the other guys. John, John and Steve have made a huge impact on my life. It hasn't been all sunshine and lollipops, and that's why I value them so much.

If there had been more time at the Broken Reunion, what other songs would you have liked to have in there?

JG: There are several songs off the *Sacrifice* album that we like to play, "Pray For Rain," "Judas Kisses," and others. For some reason we usually can't make it through a rehearsal without a spontaneous jam of "Love's Irony" erupting. We've also been known to throw in a cover like "What's So Funny about Peace Love and Understanding," as we did the following year at Spirit West Coast.

GH: You mean what songs are we going to do at the next big concert? John made some excellent suggestions, but what I want to do is

get all those bands back together and we'll do each other's songs. THAT would be fun.

Glenn also had this to share about the photograph at the beginning of this story:

GH: photo of our *Mourning Into Dancing* photo session which produced the black and white album cover. This was the night of the L.A. Street Scene festival. We, as well as Undercover, played. It was a raucous scene and the riot police were called in. I don't think they have that festival any more. The shoot location was in a bad part of town and Steve's car was broken into while we were in front of the camera. Speaking of controversies, the shirt Steve wore for this shoot (shown in all it's red-and-white rugby glory here in the attached photo) didn't go over too well with the label head, Harry Barnes. Harry was getting "cool" cues from Gene Eugene and the Gene Crowd thought our look - namely Steve's shirt - was, well, lame. It was 441's version of "Smell the Glove" except we probably would have been better off with a bona fide controversial cover like a woman on all fours with a dog collar around her neck. Maybe the Evangelical Christian version would be a woman reading the Book of Mormon with Rosary beads around her neck?

I digress. Many long discussions ensued and ideas - such as re-shooting the cover, doctoring the existing photo and filling in Steve's shirt so it was monotone, putting a picture of U2 on our cover - were all bounced around (okay, I made up the U2 thing). Ultimately, it would have been expensive and forced a delay in releasing the album. So, the shirt survived to offend hipsters worldwide.

Be sure to check out the 441 website:

[://www.441online.com](http://www.441online.com)

You can order CDs, buy mp3s, read lyrics, and check out all kinds of 441-related information.

441 can also be found on the usual sites like FaceBook, Twitter, and MySpace. See the 441 main site for links.

You can also find information about Glenn's band The Blind at their website:

[://followtheblind.com](http://followtheblind.com)



Above: John Giali at Broken concert, credit: Blake Schwendimann.
Left: McNamara and 441 album release show for *Broken Reunion* release, credit: Kim Loy.
Below: 441 (with Ronnie Martin on keys and Joe Medrano standing in on bass) during the Broken Reunion concert, August 19, 2005, credit: Blake Schwendimann.



PARAVELL:

A LIFETIME OF STARS AND DREAMS



Interview by Steve Ruff
Photos by Angela Holtzen

I miss the days when I would hear about music through another band. I remember seeing shows where band members wore t-shirts of other bands they liked and supported, and generally I would end up liking them too. These days it's all hype and selling yourself on all the networking sites, and unfortunately it is more gratuitous self-promotion than real talent. Every once in awhile though, the wheels turn and I find a treasure chest full of good music through one artist. Case in point here: Rick McDonough is a member of LS Underground and a respected solo artist in his own right as well. We have featured his photography on the back cover of most our issues as well. Rick is also the guitarist for the band Paravell, and as soon as I heard about them I purchased their first CD titled *An Evening of Stars and Dreams*.

A couple of months back Paravell released an e.p. named *galactic*. I was impressed immediately by the progression of the music, but also by the sound of *galactic*. The first record has a very "indie college rock" feel to it, while the e.p. has a "moodier, denser, emotionally charged" vibe to it. Paravell's melodies soar and the music speaks volumes, I was glad to have a chance to catch up with vocalist and guitarist Eric Kennedy for a chat.

Can you tell me where the name Paravell came from?

One of the most difficulty processes when starting a band for me is finding a fitting name. Not only do I have to feel like it fits the vision for the project but so does everyone else who is starting the project with me. I think it took us a good month to come up with the name. I really wanted the name to reflect my desire to have the music transport the listener somewhere else, almost like visiting another country. I had just been to England and the castles and countryside were very inspiring to me, so I guess that's what I was imagining I wanted the name to reflect visually. I also really wanted a name that promoters and clubs could remember and spell correctly. You don't know how many times my old band August Moons was August Moon, a simple mistake but one that was very irritating since it happened so often. We went through a plethora of names, each coming up with our own lists. One name that seemed to end up on all of ours was Cair Paravel. It was the castle name from the *Chronicles of Narnia* books which we had all read as kids. It was a good name, I also liked the spiritual heritage it would hold for me from the books. It had that "imaginary castle otherly land" feel I wanted, but for a few reasons I didn't want such a

direct correlation with the books. So I thought about it for a while and then presented the idea of Paravell to the guys, they all really liked it. Also as you can see I decided to add another "L" to the name, hoping to avoid any of those irritating misspellings. I figured that's how most people would spell it anyway and for some reason I think it looks a lot better on paper.

Who are the players in the band?

Well we let's see, at the moment we've got Rick McDonough and Matthew Harber on guitars, Christopher Bright playing drums, and me, Eric Kennedy, singing. Kiran Kumar who has recorded the last two records, is no longer with us so we are in the midst of searching for a new bassist.

How did the band come to be, where are you based out of?

Well we are based in central Orange County, California. We were born from the ashes of my previous project August Moons which I had started while attending Vanguard University. Matthew Harber, a dynamic and creative guitarist came on board with August Moons in the last two years of its existence and continued on with me to create Paravell.

After the demise of August Moons I wasn't sure if I was going to continue with music, so much of my identity was wrapped up in my previous band it took me a few months to regain the vision God had put in my heart. That vision was to share the love, hope, mercy and creativity of God through writing songs and singing them to anyone who wanted to listen. To me, although not the easiest, the best way to do that was in the form of a band, so I decided to give it another try. With Matt on board with me we went to work on some new songs and decided on a new band name, Paravell.

Since then God has blessed us with Rick McDonough, another amazingly creative guitarist and all around musician, as well as Christopher Bright, a fantastically insightful and gifted drummer. Our great friend and talented bassist for the last few years Kiran Kumar is no longer with us, so we are currently searching for the missing piece to our creative machine. In the meantime we have had some great guys filling in so we can continue playing the music we love.

Musically what would you say are the primary differences between *An Evening of Stars and Dreams* and the latest *galactic* ep?

An Evening of Stars and Dreams is a work of blood sweat and tears and pure determination. The ten songs in that album were created over a span of five or so years, passed on by a couple different bassists, guitarists, and drummers. It was a long process taking over a year to finally get recorded. We were nearing completion on the album by the time Rick joined us so he was only able to make his mark on a couple of the tracks. I was playing a lot of rhythm guitar on that album giving the songs a more rhythmically structured vibe. On the other hand our *Galactic* EP was written and recorded over a much shorter time period with all the parts played by their original creators. The bass and drums carry the songs now giving the guitars a much larger canvas to paint on. Rick and Matt's parts have a musical relationship that intertwine and grow off of each other causing the music to breath much more naturally and allowing for greater diversity and texture of sound to exist.

Do you write the majority of the music/lyrics, etc? What is the songwriting process for the band?

A typical song is birthed by a theme or concept that pops up in my mind randomly,

sometimes I'll get a lyric or two, or maybe a song title. Then I'll let it incubate in the background of my mind until its ready to jump out of my creative toaster. At that point I'll write down the lyrics I get, pull out my guitar or sit down at the piano to work on a melody. Once I figure out a basic song structure I'll type it up and introduce it to one or all of the guys. I let them know what the song is about and actually try to explain the feelings and visual that I want people to see in their minds eye when they hear the music. From there it's a purely collaborative project. Everyone expressing through their own musical instruments their interpretation of the lyrics. We try to allow our parts to grow and bend as we hear the inspirational flow coming from each other's newly becoming parts. This can be a stressful and sensitive experience for us at times, but the benefits our music reaps from it make it well worth the struggle. It's what I love about being in a band verses doing a solo project. For me there is no comparison.

Are there plans for Paravell to tour at any point in the future?

Unfortunately no, We would love to do a mini tour up and down California, but right now we are just focusing on building a local audience.

Do you think that the digital age of music helps or hurts bands these days, can you explain?

I think for small bands like us it can help when it comes to sharing the music freely with others over the internet through social networking sites, and by putting us on a more level playing field with larger bands in the promotion department, but it's a double edged sword. At shows it seems harder and harder to sell CD's. People love the music live but often put off a purchase of the music for a later time. They decide to wait till they get home to download it. Right there is a big problem, as soon as they leave the show we are no longer their focus, it's going to bed and another day at the office. The music purchase is forgotten or one of those things they always "mean to get to." You can give the music away at a show, and we have and we're glad to, but again it costs money to put the CD's out. No money makes it hard to keep that process going. Not

giving up though that's for sure, we're keeping ourselves focused and creative. Something's going to work out; God is our strength and hope through it all.

<http://www.paravell.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/paravell>
www.paravell.bandcamp.com
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Paravell/208129321220>





TATTOO YOU



RYAN WEAVER: The Timeless Tradition of Tattooing

By Steve Ruff

Most of you guys here will remember a great little band from the early Tooth 'N Nail days called Joe Christmas. That was back when Tooth 'N Nail was still an indie label and the roster was a unique calling card of a myriad of genres. It was about 15 years ago that Joe Christmas put out *Upstairs, Overlooking*, a decade and a half ago and way ahead of it's time. Ryan Weaver played bass in the group for both of their releases. Their second album was *North To The Future* – and while it had a slicker sound, they still had that indie, emo (before emo was a bad word) eclectic charm that was unique in all respects.

After the unfortunate demise of Joe Christmas, Ryan played bass in Spudgun which was a great, old-school punk rock outfit that signed to the Bulletproof label. Spudgun was fun, high energy and a definite throwback to the classic days of the white heat punk rock sound. After one album Spudgun called it quits and from their ashes arose World Against World where Ryan also played bass. World Against World is probably my absolute favorite crust-core band of days gone by. There was nothing else that sounded like them, they were also signed to Bulletproof but unfortunately only released the one album. Another band that was ahead of their time and short lived.

Ryan began tattooing right around the same time that World Against World released *Until The Day Breaks and The Shadows Flee Away*. That is when I met him. He was still apprenticing as a tattoo artist and I proudly sport a piece that he did on my leg 11 years ago which is one of my favorite traditional tattoo designs, the "Man's Ruin". While Ryan specializes in traditional styles, he is also an accomplished black and grey artist as well, honing his craft while learning from some of the best. Since knowing Ryan he has done my entire left sleeve, my left hand and knuckles, a couple of pieces on both legs and a huge vintage style pin-up on my ribcage. Ribs are the most painful of all places to have tattooed I think, and after 4 hours of work there, I still haven't touched that spot (or finished the piece) in over a year.

Here's a little chat with Ryan about his art, hope you guys enjoy this. Check out the links below to see more of his work, and also check out the August issue of Skin and Ink magazine that features Ryan's work along with the other artists at Timeless Tattoo. As for me, I have an appointment with him in a couple of hours!

What first drew you to tattooing?

Well, I love most anything that looks tough and has a classic-old style to it and to me, tattoos were the best of both worlds. So, after years of getting covered, and learning about the history and some of the guys that anchored the traditional Americana style that, to this day, is as strong as it ever was, I was drawn into the brotherhood of tattooers.

How long have you been tattooing?

I've been tattooing about 11 and a half years

Who are some of your influences in your art and in your life?

Influences as far as art currently are Sailor Jerry, Bob Shaw, Bill Jones, and my friends Sid Stankovits, Rob Knight and Cap Szumski. Influences in my life are THE MOST HIGH and His love, my wife Heather and my son, Billy Jo.

What were some of the more memorable shows that you played?

Probably the most memorable was a show at Cornerstone. It was just about dark and the tent was packed with about 1200 people. As soon as we started playing it looked like lightening in there from all the camera flashes. It was the closest thing to feeling like a rock star.

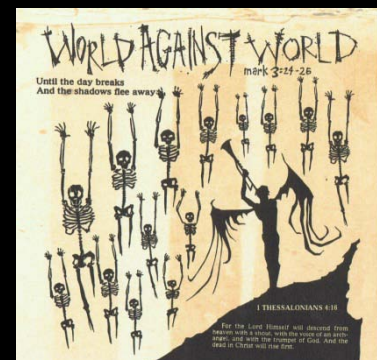
Who are some of your favorite bands?

I don't have any favorites really. Mostly old stuff, old country, old punk rock, old rockabilly. You get the idea...

What are you currently listening to?

Currently in my car is this old thing called a "cd". On this "cd" is the music of The Crucified's album *Pillars of Humanity* It's a great record. Timeless.

[://www.hybridtattooing.com](http://www.hybridtattooing.com)
<http://www.timeless-tattoo.com>
[://www.facebook.com/timelesstattoo](http://www.facebook.com/timelesstattoo)



Bill Walden

...continuing the discussion on “Homosexuality, God and the Church” ...

Interview by Steve Ruff

I would venture to say that the last issue we put out, “Homosexuality, God and the Church” was by far the most responded to issue we have done. Matt might disagree with me because he sees all the feedback directly, but from the message board chatter in various places and emails that were sent to me personally, it seems that a bunch of people were talking... good, that was the point. We tried very hard to present three different stories of gay musicians and their journey, stories that we did not take sides on, we were presenting the path they had traveled and are still traveling.

One of my goals with the article was to present the way that I thought the church has responded to this issue. I think the feedback confirmed my beliefs. I saw feedback from people immediately mocking and poking fun to hard lined theology holders – all the way down to people telling me that “I’m going to hell”, and that I am more concerned with the “acceptance of man than the acceptance of God.” We were accused of presenting a bias when we never took a stand on the issue, we were only sharing someone else’s story. I personally never shared my beliefs until very recently on a message board, I made sure that when the article came out I remained neutral because I did not want to promote a theology over the stories, I was hoping the stories would take center stage. I regret recently sharing my personal take on the issue, I should have known better.

One of the good things that came from the article was Ric Alba and Bill Walden reconnecting to a much deeper degree. Many of you will remember Bill as the original lead singer in Undercover, and then he also fronted his own band Fourth Watch several years later. Bill is now a pastor and brought some good dialogue into the conversation. I was particularly interested in how he thought the church has treated the issue of homosexuality because he is a pastor. Ric Alba and I have been in communication numerous times since the article ran, and after he and Bill reconnected, we decided to offer another aspect of the issue as well. This is Bill Walden’s take on the issue of “Homosexuality, God and the Church.” We did dip our toes into theology with this one, even though it is a very shallow stirring of the theological waters. It is not easy to discuss theology and different persuasions through

email and text, but Bill has some valid points to what he believes and I am glad that he is able to share them here with us. Again, hopefully this will keep the conversation flowing.

Can you tell me what years you played with Undercover and who else was in the band then?

I auditioned for Undercover in the fall of 1980, and was in the band until March 1984.

When I was in the band, the lineup was Joe Taylor on keys, Gym Nicholson on guitar, Ric Alba on bass, Danny Pavlis on drums and Ray Hersom on guitar.

What albums did you play on?

I was on the first album which was simply called *Undercover*. I was also on *God Rules* and *Boys And Girls Renounce The World*.

Why did you leave the band?

There were a number of reasons why I left Undercover. During my time singing with them, I believed that God was stirring my heart towards pastoral ministry. That would not happen until 1989, but the stirring was starting back in 1983/84.

Internally, I was going a different direction than the band was. There were some personal conflicts among us, and some of the things that the group was embracing, I wasn’t embracing. I was increasingly feeling that I didn’t belong. The ministry aspect of Undercover was changing, and I didn’t fit in with where the band was going. Looking back, the emphasis of what was being

communicated is obvious. I don’t believe that John 3:16 needs to be quoted in every song, but for me, communicating Jesus through the music was always the most important thing.

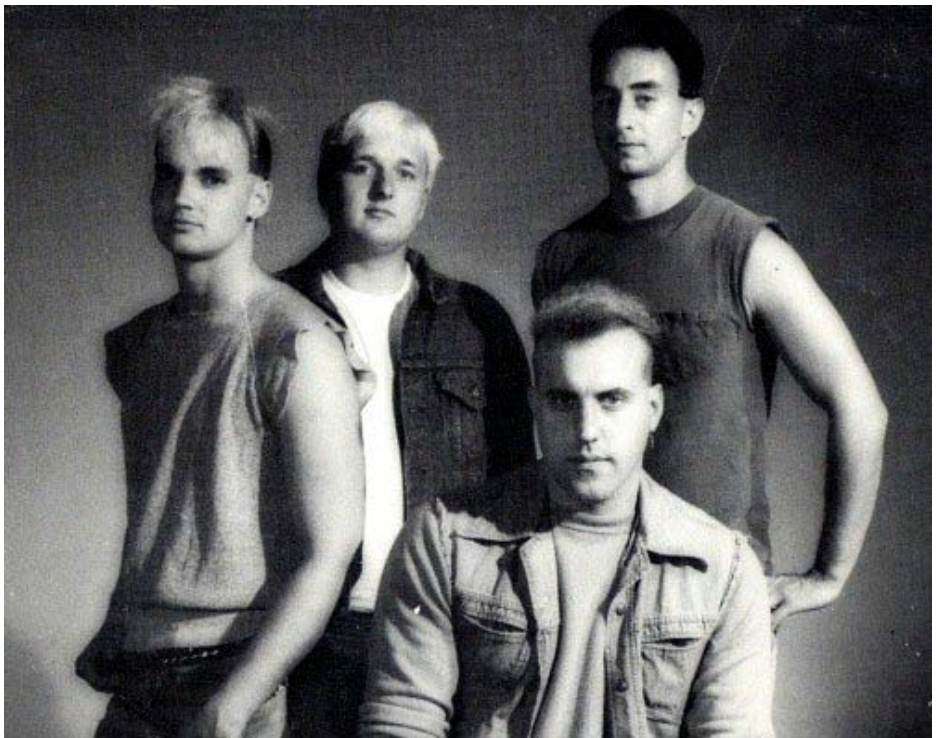
Finally, as has been evidenced by the *Branded* album (Undercover’s 4th album), the group wanted to go in a direction musically that I was not vocally made for. Musically speaking, the group was blessed to get Sim Wilson as their new singer. They were going in a musical direction of harder, darker music, and I wasn’t a good fit for that. I am fine with all that. *Branded* was a great album.

Musically, I personally desired to do more of my own thing. Steve Pannier (Altar Boys) and I formed a band called The Fourth Watch. Steve broke away from The Altar Boys for about three years, and we did one album together. I very much enjoyed being more in charge of what I was doing musically, as well as communicating Jesus both on and off the stage.

Let me finish this portion of the interview by saying that though there were personal conflicts as I left Undercover, I am currently friends with all the guys. I share some very different views on God and life than some of them, but we appreciate what happened in those early days of Undercover, and we are friends today, and we have no heartburn with each other. I am very thankful for that. I still consider all those guys my friends. I am still in touch with Joe, Gym, and Ric.

When did you become a pastor and what is the name of your church? Does your church have a website?

I was hired on at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa



in 1989, and was ordained in 1990. In 1991, our family moved to Napa, CA and we started Cornerstone Ministries. I have pastored Cornerstone since '91. Our web site is www.cmnv.org. For any who might be interested, my personal blogsite is www.pastorbillwalden.com. I write a lot of musings about God and life.

I know what you and Ric talked about to some degree, can you share the crux of the conversation so our readers can know about the agreement that you guys made?

Ric and I rediscovered each other through Facebook, and we started writing back and forth, and making comments on other people's threads, etc. When I ran into Ric on Facebook, he was openly expressing his homosexuality. We would banter back and forth on people's Facebook pages, commenting on threads, and disagreeing on some topics, including homosexuality and the theology of substitutionary atonement. We also shared some laughs and gentle jabs at one another. The chemistry felt good.

When Ric was in Undercover, he and I always got along well. He was and is a very funny guy, a very clever guy, and a compassionate man. It was easy to appreciate and enjoy his friendship.

I began to realize that we were talking to each other through other people's Facebook pages, as opposed to talking directly on the phone. I suggested to Ric that we talk on the phone, and he beat me to the punch.

It was great to reconnect with him, hear his voice, and reminisce a bit. He shared with me about his present life pursuits. I had read his article in your magazine, and had read a lot of other stuff about his early years in church, and his internal conflict regarding his same sex attraction preference, and how that was colliding with his Christian values and/or church culture, those two things not always being equal. I had a pretty good understanding of where he was at, and what he had been through. Reading the article he wrote for your magazine filled in a lot of the gaps, and helped me understand where Ric had been and where he is at now.

I think that by nature, neither Ric nor I are eager to get involved with confrontation, but we are both passionate about what we believe, so the topic of his homosexuality came up. It had to. It was the elephant in the room.

As a Christian man, and as a pastor, I want to understand how people think. I asked Ric to speak freely, and to share his views, feelings, and opinions. I shared mine as well.

I don't totally understand how gay men think, what they feel, what they want, expect, or how they view the world. I am straight, and

Ric is gay. I wanted to understand what makes him tick. I want to not be alienated from gays, but I want to understand them and befriend them, as much as possible.

I shared with Ric about how I was asked to speak at a Prop 8 rally, and how shocked I was to discover that the gay people there were sure that I hated them. I wandered over to a pickup truck where some same sex proponents were making posters, and I hung around for a while. The "No On Hate" posters surprised me. I realize that as a Christian, I live in a sub culture, and so I was surprised at the viewpoints of some of the gay people I talked to that day. I eventually chatted with one gay man, and tried to assure him that I don't hate gays, but he insisted that all Christians hate gays. I was surprised and saddened, and could only imagine what might have caused that opinion in him.

But I also realized that though I may inadvertently live in a sub culture, so did this man. He lived in a sub culture that told him all Christians hate gays, which is just not true. Our two cultures intersected that day, and I believe that I came out of it a bit wiser and less naïve.

Ric and I discussed the views of some who say that Christian pastors who preach about homosexuality being a sin are actually committing a hate crime. There have been pastors who have been arrested for doing so. I asked Ric what he thought about that, and would he agree with the charge of a hate crime against me if I preached that homosexuality was a sin.

Ric told me that he would be the first to bail me out of jail. He said that he believes that I have the right to share my view and speak my heart, even if it disagrees with his view and lifestyle. I decided at that point that I need to keep his cell phone number handy. (Insert recorded audience laughter here)

I also asked Ric how he would feel about me writing an article, and expressing an opposing view regarding homosexuality and Christianity. He supported my desire to write this article, saying that he supports my right to express my heart. I wasn't asking his permission, but the fact that he supported this made it easier to do so.

He and I disagree on a number of things. We disagree about crucial aspects of Christian theology. We disagree on much about Church culture. We disagree on the issue of homosexuality.

However, we both agree that each of us has the right to express our opinions, without fear of retribution. We both struggle with some aspects of The Modern Church. There was much of our common church experience that neither one of us liked, and that we still don't like as we see it being acted out in the Church

Universal. We both agree that mutual love and acceptance of one another is important, even when that love and acceptance doesn't condone of certain aspects of a friend's lifestyle choices or convictions.

I disagree with Ric about some big issues, but I love him as a friend and person, and I respect that he has a right to choose his lifestyle, even though I strongly disagree with it.

What are your views regarding homosexuality and the lifestyle?

I believe that homosexuality is a sin. It "misses the mark" of how God created us. It is a lifestyle that God never intended or designed for us.

I think that the Bible is very clear on this issue. I know that people are very passionate on this issue, but I have never understood how what the Bible says about homosexuality could be so misunderstood or twisted to say something other than what it says.

I believe that because of the fallen state of mankind, that we are all predisposed to certain behaviors, tendencies, and desires that fall outside of what God originally intended for us as humans. Everyone has predispositions that lead to sin. There are no exceptions. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is clear.

"⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

There are a whole lot of things listed there. This list describes six things that have happened in my life. I stink, and I know it. The great news is found in verse 11. Jesus washes, sanctifies, and justifies all who will come to Him and agree with Him about their need for a Savior.

There are plenty of verses in the Bible about homosexuality, and any number of sins. It seems clear to me. Homosexuality is one of many sins that are listed in the Bible, but Christ died to cleanse us from whatever predisposition we may have, and from whatever sins we may have committed.

The essence of Christianity is that mankind has sinned against God, and deserves to be judged for his sins. God loved the world and sent his Son to die for our sins, to bring pardon, forgiveness, healing, restoring, transformation. If we don't accept God's

word regarding our sins, then why do we need Jesus?

All that being said, I can somewhat understand why someone would be attracted to someone of their same sex. Everyone wants to be loved and be accepted. Everyone wants approval, and wants to feel significant. Gay men might be attracted to men for any or all of the same reasons that hetero men are attracted to women. The desire for sex, the desire for friendship, having a "soul mate", etc. As I said previously, I don't know all of how a gay man thinks or feels, so there might be psychological aspects that I don't understand among some gay men and their same sex attraction, but everyone wants to be accepted. I understand that much.

Whether it be a 50 year old man with a mid-life crisis who divorces his wife for a 25 year old girl, or whether it be a gay man wanting another man, or a young child wrongly seeking approval from an abusive adult, or a parishioner wrongly hoping to please a tyrannical pastor; everyone wants to be accepted and loved, but we often go about it in very wrong ways. And sometimes we just want something so bad that we ignore what God says, and we throw off His restraint, and do what we want.

By your viewpoint, how has 'the church' treated homosexuals down through the years?

The Church Universal has some very bright spots in her history, and some very dark spots. I will never defend the sum history of the Church, because many wrongs and many crimes have been committed in the name of Jesus Christ by people who did not rightly represent the true heart of Jesus.

Personally, I hate when Christians wave signs and protest against gays. I hate signs that say, "God Hates Fags". That is a total misrepresentation of God. God loves mankind. The cross is God's proof of His love for mankind. God will eventually judge all men, but that doesn't mean He doesn't love them.

I personally struggle with factions within the Church that want to mobilize against the Gay community. I realize that there are radicals in all camps, and that they want to exterminate one another. They over react, they assume the worst, and they get to the place where they are filled with hate and in their minds they dehumanize those in opposition to their ideals. Some Christians do it, and some gays do it. Republicans do it, Democrats do it. Conservatives and Liberals do it. All that stuff stinks to me.

Sometimes, I feel as alienated by some factions within the Church as I do by those who hate the Church.

On the other hand, there are those within the Church that love those in the gay community, and are often overlooked. The radicals always get the attention of the press. Those within the Church that quietly love their neighbors, regardless of sexual preference, go quietly unnoticed.

One follow up theologically speaking. I know there isn't space and time to hash out this stuff in writing. Referencing the scripture that you brought up, I quoted the scripture below, and then a different interpretation below that. Can you share your thoughts with me on this?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

In the first verse, "Do you not know that the unrighteous..." Before we are saved we are unrighteous, it is salvation and the cleansing of the blood of Christ that makes us righteous. Before we are saved we are known by our actions, our sin, our flesh, etc... after we are saved we are known by our righteousness (our true identity) because we are covered in the blood of Christ. Christ's blood covers our transgressions, our flesh, so that we can have communion with God. God is Holy, He cannot be around sin or even look on sin, so that is where Christ's blood covers our sin, our flesh, etc. So, when God looks at his children, He sees the blood of His Son, He doesn't see our sin, our flesh, etc...He sees His Son. That is why in verse 11 it says "such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Prior to accepting Christ we were known by our flesh, our sin, our actions (homosexuals, liars, adulterers, etc.) after accepting we are known as children of God. Notice also that justified, sanctified and washed are all past tense, something that already happened, not something that we are waiting to happen.

Obviously this is a surface stab at a much larger issue with a gazillion rabbit trails to run down theologically, but what are your thoughts?

We have two planes of communion with God. There are two ways that we are known by Him. The first way we are known by God is in our positional justification. You described it well. When a man or a woman is in Christ, God can have fellowship with that person because their sins have been paid for.

Positionally, that person is considered cleansed, justified, forgiven, holy. The second way that we are known by God is in the realm of practical holiness. Are we walking in a life of holiness? Are we thanking God for our positional justification, but walking day after day in sin?

In this same chapter, in verses 18-20, Paul exhorts the Christians at Corinth to flee sexual immorality.

They have been forgiven, but they still need to flee from sexual sin. 1 Cor. 6:18-20 ¹⁸Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." They don't flee from sexual sin so that they can BE saved, but because they ARE saved. They are exhorted to glorify God in their bodies by NOT participating in sexual sin.

They are told to glorify God by the way they live. So....they are saved, but are commanded to walk in (practical) holiness, and to glorify God in their bodies. They do that by fleeing sexual sin. Ephesians 4:1 is another classic verse about walking in holiness. "¹I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called"... Ephesians chapters 1-3 explain all that God did to save those Ephesian Christians. Then, based upon what God first did, they are called to walk worthy of the calling (life) to which they were called.

We walk in holiness not to save ourselves (unable to do that), but because we were saved for God, and God is holy. We glorify God when we walk in holiness. The HOLY Spirit leads us into holiness. God is holy. Jesus died to save us from Hell, and to make us holy. We are to walk in that which Christ died to give us.

PLUS....if he indwells us, Him IN me is longing for holiness IN me. If He is holy, and living in me, and I am living like I used to... That is a disconnect. Him IN me, and me living immorally? How does Jesus feel about that?

In your other email you said "the church is being redefined as it has since the beginning, and the current redefinition is regarding the gay lifestyle." Can you elaborate on that? How do you think it is being redefined, and do you see this as a good thing or a bad thing?

Since Jesus walked the Earth, He has been misunderstood and pressed into molds that fit people's preferences. Regardless of what camp we align ourselves with; we shouldn't try to remake Jesus to fit our lifestyle. Our lives ought to conform to Who He is, not the reverse. I read a quote about 18 years ago

which said. "In the beginning, God created man, and since then, man has been trying to return the favor". That is man's constant tendency.

Jesus has always been the victim of redefinition. My fight as a Christian and as a man, is to not redefine Jesus to fit my preferences, but to seek to allow Him to conform my life that it may more accurately look like His life.

I believe that the current trend of people saying that you can be gay and be a Christian too is another chapter in the book that redefines Jesus and historical Christianity. I do not believe that this is good. I think it is wrong.

Many of the objections to Biblical references regarding homosexuality are found in the Old Testament, which people quote and try to present as being totally irrelevant for us. Many of those passages are irrelevant to us. This article/interview doesn't allow for all those arguments to be brought forth.

Suffice it to say that the Old Testament Law was specifically given to the Jews, and is not binding on present day Christians regarding civil actions taken against lawbreakers. Israel was a theocracy (rule of God). America is not a theocracy. We are a democracy. Many of the Old Testament principles are carried forward into the New Testament, but without the civil laws and penalties attached to them.

The principles are the same, but the treatment of people involved is different. It is the eternal principles that we need to be concerned with.

Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament approve of homosexuality. I think a lot of theological gymnastics have to take place in order to re-write or re-interpret scripture in order to try to make homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle for a Christian.

There are plenty of websites and books that discuss all this, and I don't intend to write out all the theological reasons and scripture verses to try to support my point.

My main concern is this: Christianity is once again being redefined, and the current redefinition is all about the idea that you can actively be gay and be a Christian. I don't see that in the Bible at all. It's just not there.

If someone is gay, so be it. God loves gays. God loves all of humanity. But don't say God accepts homosexuality as a Christian lifestyle. It's not in the Bible.

Some Christian musicians have recently declared their homosexuality, and are freely integrating it as a part of normal Christian living. My concern is the theological degradation of the faith. Another part of the foundation of the Christian faith is being chipped away at.

This might sound very weird, but I would rather hear people say, "I am gay, and I understand that the Bible condemns homosexuality, but I don't care, because I don't believe the Bible". I would rather see someone reject the Bible than try to re-write it. I would rather see someone reject Jesus than to try to redefine Him.

I believe the Bible to be God's word to mankind, and my ongoing concern is the current efforts at reshaping it. We ought always seek to understand it, and to apply and re-apply it to our present day culture. In that sense, we are always taking a fresh, new look at it, but this current issue is blatantly erroneous, in my opinion.

To summarize, I do not defend the total sum history of the Christians Church. The Church has done much good and bad. If someone has heartburn with the Church, I am right there with you on much of it.

I apologize in part for much of the current maltreatment of the homosexual community by those who claim to follow Christ. If any readers have been mistreated by The Church, I am saddened. I ask only that somehow,

those readers would take a fresh look at Jesus.

I do not live by the civil laws of the Old Testament. Those laws were for the theocratic nation of Israel. Those laws were civil punishment for sins, and I am not under that system.

However, many of the principles do carry over to the Christian faith, and are repeated in the New Testament. Homosexuality is one of the things spoken about on both Testaments. Homosexuality is condemned by God. So is the hatred that some "Christians" have against gays.

It may seem strange that I sound sympathetic to those who have been hurt by the Church, and in the next paragraph, speak of homosexuality being condemned by God. God's love and his judgment of sin are not mutually exclusive.

Finally, every reader needs to decide whether they believe the Bible or not. We need to understand it in its context, and then we need to decide if we believe it or not.

I say believe it, or don't believe it, but don't re-write it.

Thanks for letting me share my thoughts.

I will sign off the way I used to autograph albums: "Follow Jesus".





BRIAN KIRSCH

STERLING DISHES ON LIFE, PAIN, REGRESSION AND MR.SUNSHINE

Interview by Steve Ruff

This conversation with Brian Kirsch (a.k.a. Sterling) has been a very interesting one to say the least. Not only did we talk about his band Veil of Ashes, but we talked about life, faith, and the journey that he has been on recently. One of the things I enjoy so much with this zine is not just being able to talk to my favorite artists, but to also talk about their lives and where they are now. Following someone through their music is a very personal thing in a sense, sometimes it means something different to everyone, but these are the ideas that we listen to and the ones that I have grown up with.

Veil of Ashes was in the 'alternative' Christian scene early on. They released a couple of demos on Realty Records, the first was *Prayers For The World*, and the second was *Negro* (pronounced nay-gro, means 'black' in Spanish, referring to a color). Their first CD was *Pain* and that was released on Graceland Records, followed by *The Young And Reckless* *The Regression of Veil of Ashes* on Michael Knott's Blonde Vinyl label, and as their final

offering there was *Mr. Sunshine* released on Eden Records. Veil of Ashes had a big following in the Bay Area and played some shows with some big named acts, but as fate would have it, their career was ended too soon.

We interviewed lead singer Sean Doty in our previous issue, and here I wanted to do something a little different, interview Brian who was the bassist and one of the primary songwriters. Brian and I have spoken on a couple of occasions and it has been fun to talk about the 'glory days' of the scene where stuff was new and fresh, but it has been just as interesting to hear him talk about his personal life and what he has been going through personally. I think it is safe to say that Brian has endured a large amount of loss and hurt, and the difficult trials have led to him questioning his faith and direction. When Brian and I talk the conversation seems easy and I enjoy listening. What I decided to do was take this interview and break it down into three parts. This will be the first installment, and I hope that you, the reader, will find the story interesting as well.

If you never heard Veil of Ashes you can check out their Facebook page and click on the music tab where they have MP3's from all their major releases up and available for your listening pleasure. Stop by their page, drop them a line and say hello... for now, enjoy this first part interview with Brian Kirsch!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/VEIL-OF-ASHES/354542937541>

How was the songwriting process in Veil?

Well, Sean wrote all the lyrics of course. Me and Sean were pretty much like Lennon & McCartney for the most part, we would work on stuff and then once we got into practice I would write everything on my bass and Sean would write on guitar. Whatever I would write I would pretty much have everything worked out like the chord progressions, where the verse was, where the chorus was and where the bridge was. When I was in high school, I took two years of college level music theory, so that helped a great deal.

You and Sean were founding members of the band, correct?

Yeah, me and Sean were the only two original members for the entire seven years the band was together.

How did you and Sean get hooked up?

Well, you interviewed Bantz in the Belfry right? That's Nelson Demarco's band, and Nelson is a mutual friend of ours. Nelson played keyboards in this band at this church that I was going to at the time. It was one of those mega churches, and I was kind of the weird guy at church because I was going

through the college careers group and I wasn't in college, but I was in that age group. I was into a lot of music that most people weren't into at the time like The Alarm, The Damned, U2 and stuff like that. So Nelson thought I needed to meet these guys and he introduced me to Sean. We hung out a little bit and tried to give it a go. Originally it was just Sean and Phil, and they were doing this kind of keyboard based band because Sean is more of a keyboard or piano trained artist. Me joining the band really changed the direction of the band musically. You ever heard Depeche Mode's first album, the one they call the 'happy album'? They were kind of doing something in that direction and I came in and pretty much darkened it up musically.

I know *Pain* was the first major release and prior to that what was there?

Prayers for the World and *Negro*. *Prayers for the World* was the first one we did, it was a little 4 song e.p., after that we did *Negro*. The way we did stuff at that time was that we kind of divided stuff up, me and Sean pretty much ran the business of the band. Sean took care of getting the shows and dealing with all that type stuff until we got our road manager, and I was pretty much the visual representation of the band with the flyers, album cover and stuff like that.

I was very heavily into 4AD artists at the time like Wolfgang Press, Cocteau Twins and Throwing Muses and they were on a label out of England called Creation Records. My art direction was visually geared in the same direction as those artists.

One thing I do want to say about Veil's *Pain* album though. There is a website that is kind of dedicated to Ed McTaggart... Ed McTaggart had nothing to do with the art direction of the *Pain* album. It was all my idea, I sent them all the mock ups for that album. A friend of ours, Debbie Smith, she did all the artwork for the *Negro* tape and for our first t-shirt which was the cubistic rendering of the crucifixion, and she did all the mock ups for the *Pain* album. All that stuff, basically everything that was visually representative of Veil of Ashes was by my art direction. Ed McTaggart's a nice guy but I really want people to know the truth because when we got the first CD back I was like, "Oh man...okay."

Why did you guys split up?

Like Sean alluded to, pretty much everybody was getting married and having kids. Sean had gotten married, Mike Jackson who was the drummer at the time was getting married, Rich Medina who was the keyboardist was leaning in that direction and we were all pretty split up all over the bay area as well. We faithfully practiced 3 or 4 times a week, but at this point people were having kids and it was getting harder to get together.

There was a fair amount of disillusionment as well. It's hard to do stuff when people thought we were basically evil ya know? I look back on it and I think a lot of it was due to our lyrical content, but nothing that I could see was really that controversial. Basically we were just writing about the subjects in Christendom that nobody really wanted to talk about.

As far as radio play, you guys got good radio play as well, but when "Queen for A Day" came out that kind of derailed it?

Yeah, that killed it. That was the nail in the coffin. I don't know, I think our biggest mistake sometimes was not delineating who we really were. I'm very proud of the albums and what we did musically, but I don't think we should have ever signed to a Christian label. It's very, very frustrating... when we put out *Prayers for the World and Negro* there was a magazine called Option magazine, and it pretty much covered all genres of music and was more indie oriented. They used to have ads in the back of the magazine where you would send them \$25 and they would send you their database of 500 college radio stations throughout the US and Canada. That really helped us get a hold of some of our biggest pushes. I sent everything we had out to some of these radio stations and we were actually getting charted at #1 on a few college stations out in the Midwest. So when we got signed I told those guys at Frontline, this is what we've been doing, this is how we've been marketing ourselves and this is what you should do, but of course they didn't listen to a word we had to say.

Well, you guys were a great band and you put out some great music don't you think?

Musically there were some great moments. "Corpse" was great, "The Hunger" is probably one of the best things I ever wrote, but it just wasn't really dark enough for me. My biggest complaint with CCM music at that time was all these bands had this attitude of, "Oh you like that band, well we'll be the Christian version of them for you." I mean, what a bunch of crap. I always loved Daniel Amos, The 77's, Undercover, Lifesavers, Breakfast With Amy... those guys were in bands and they were great musicians, they weren't trying to copy anybody or any sound in the regular market.

What were some of the more memorable shows that you played?

Playing with The Call back to back. We did a series of concerts for California Concerts and got to the point where we pretty much got first choice of all the big alternative acts that were coming through the Bay Area, and we played the first night with The Call in San Francisco, the second night was in Oakland at The Omni. The show with The Psychedelic Furs was a great show, we pre-sold 500 tickets for that show. You really find out how petty

people are though because Richard Butler didn't want to have a local band opening for them, so at the sound check it was like two groups camped out at two separate tables with Butler just staring us down.

What did you do after Veil, didn't you play in some other bands?

After Veil I stayed in the Bay Area for about a year then came back home to Vegas around 1994. The music scene was off the hook around here from about 1994 until 2000, everyone thought it was going to be the next Seattle. By this time I was out of the CCM community and I was stage managing a band called "Acoustic Asylum" and I was playing in a goth band called "Rain". All the Goths around here got tired of being ignored so we all formed a co-op of artists, musicians and poets in order to play shows and productions and that worked really well. After that I was playing in a band called "They", we just did a two piece thing with a Roland 808 and a bass guitar. It was like a 'rock-tronica' act, just bass guitar and electronics. We got signed to the Orange Pill record label but that didn't last long, apparently I was too wild and too hard to handle. (laughter) The last thing I did musically was about 10 years ago with Dave Keuning the guitar player from The Killers. We were doing this 3 piece thing with this French-Italian chick who was completely nuts, but that didn't last very long and it was the last thing that I did musically.

Are Veil talking at all about possibly getting back in the studio and playing again?

Well, there's always the talk. We got back together back in March of this year and did some work in Masaki's studio, but I can't talk about that right now, that's all still under wraps. I've got a bunch of stuff that people

thought disappeared over time... I've got the last 3 demos we recorded when we were looking for a deal after Mr. Sunshine and I've been talking to Sean about that. I've got a recording of Veil at Cornerstone 1988 mostly on tape, it's a bit grainy, it's like a bootleg. I also have some remixes of different songs that we did off the Mr. Sunshine album. I would really love to get the three demo songs out to people ya know, it's like when we broke up as a band we had really just hit a stride in our writing. Really and honestly I am a bit surprised that there is an appetite for Veil of Ashes, I mean people hated us... we weren't a band that people were mediocre about, they either loved us or hated us.

What are you in to musically these days? I know you don't play anymore but do you still listen to music?

I do, but not as voraciously as I did when I was younger. Bauhaus put out a new album a couple of years ago that was really good... um, Siouxsie from Siouxsie and the Banshees put out her first real solo album a couple of years ago also and I really liked that. Who else? The Damned put out a new album and they're still recording and touring. I love The Verve too and got to see them play awhile back, there was much weeping involved... they are just amazing. For the most part though I find new music these days to be pretty boring, everybody sounds like everybody else. It seems like we're back in the attitude of the mid 70's as far as corporate music crap, and that was what was really cool about Veil back in the day... it was the whole DIY attitude. There were the independent labels like Frontier Records and Homestead that were putting out great acts like Minutemen and Mission of Burma, Husker Du and stuff like that. It seems like everything got swallowed up into the major labels. I've got some friends



that are in a band called Devilcar and they're freaking amazing, they're kind of like Elvis Costello meets The Jam meets Cheap Trick. I'll send you a CD if you want to check them out, but they are secular.

That's no problem, I love hearing new music and I listen to just as much secular as I do Christian music.

By the way, I haven't stepped inside a church since 1992.

Really? Is that due to anything that you saw in the industry, or how did that happen?

Well, it's a lot of stuff really. I'm in a weird place right now, and I'm what I would consider an agnostic at this point. I just have too many questions right now about a lot of things right now. Sean and I were talking about this while we were recording and I have questions about basic issues like eternal security and eternal salvation and things like that. I basically have two ideas, and one is that Jesus said "Because you're neither hot nor cold I will spew you out of My mouth", and I've always had this mentality of I'm either going to serve Him or I'm not, I'm not going to do anything wishy washy. It's an either or situation as far as I'm concerned and it's always been that way for me. The other thing is that God is very set in who He is and I'm not worried about my salvation. You know, if He's going to take care of us He's going to take care of us and He doesn't retract His gifts.

Well, people change and life is a journey that we're all on...

Yeah, I've just been going through allot of crap the last couple of years. In October it will be two years that I lost my job. I'm a compounding technician at a compounding pharmacy, I make peoples intravenous medication whether it's antibiotics, pain therapy or chemo therapy. I actually want to go back to school and get my doctorate and become a full blown pharmacist.

So did you lose your job due to the downturn in the economy?

No, one of the pharmacists that I worked with was my girlfriend, and she killed herself. She more or less ate

a bullet and then I spent the next month or so just drinking myself into the gutter. During that time I smoked some pot and when I came back to work they drug tested me and fired me when the test came back positive... I thought, "Man, really?", but they are a big corporate company and there's not much flexibility in companies like that.

Man that's rough, I'm sorry to hear about that.

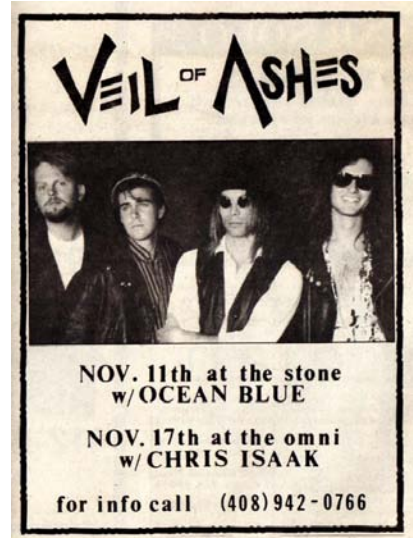
Yeah, well at least now I can talk about it...

It's kind of adding insult to injury to lose the job on top of everything else.

Well the worst part was that it happened right as the economy was taking a dive and I've been turning out applications to hospitals and some health care facilities but the frustrating thing is that you can't just walk in somewhere and talk to someone because everything is online now. So you hope someone got your application and looked at it, but it's like burning a virtual piece of paper and throwing it up in the air. What can you do....?

That my friends ends part one of the

dialogue. We will have at least two more parts to finish this interview up. I think it continues to get better and better, we'll talk more with Brian in the next issue but in the meantime check out the Veil of Ashes face book page, listen to some classic music and join us when we return.



Was It So Bad?

by Joshua Lory

I should start out by saying that I have never felt that Christian music is for people to be led to the Lord, I feel it's for Christians to listen to and relate to, after all Christians are making the music. I feel a difference in the bands, I feel a truer passion in the lyrics and the players. The bands I am talking about are the ones covered in Down The Line Zine.

There is a lot of bad blood within the Christian market, mainly because Jesus Christ's name was brought into the business. People not being given what they were promised and told because they are Christians they should accept that because of some lame "Biblical" reason they made up. The Bible is a manipulative tool we should look closer at. But the question I ask is, "If Jesus was out of that picture and the outcome was the same, the artist would have still felt screwed over and pissed off?" That is what I want to figure out, what was so bad with the old days. Is playing a 21 and up show with ten drunk frat boys that could care less about your band in attendance along with some sympathetic friends and a few of the core fans better than playing for 300 to 500 kids that want to see your band at a church or school? Are you selling more merch than the bar is making in drinks? More than likely you would have been screwed over in the secular market with thousands of other bands that fared far less successful than you. I always get such an ungrateful vibe from a lot of artists that in my opinion were pampered. Someone paid for your CD's and cassettes to be made and, though it may have sucked, they had distribution. I was able to buy the albums. You could sell them at your shows and out of your car if you had the ambition. MC Hammer made a lot of money selling out of the back of his car before he got a deal. When you weren't playing the good ol' secular pay to play venues, you rocked some large crowds at churches and I was in attendance!

What I've gathered from the older artist from the Christian market is that they wanted the same recognition as the artist in the secular mainstream. Some of the newer bands have achieved that success, the older bands got left behind, and that killed a scene that meant a whole lot to me and others that were involved, THANKS! I can understand that and relate to it, I for a time left the Christian scene to get that recognition. It sucked, it's been the same redundant bullsh*t 21 and up dive bar year after year and the only other option is not playing live. You can not convey compassion at a bar, no one gives a sh*t when they're drunk! Sonny from P.O.D. said something to the likes of that. He looked out at thousands of fans and could see the same hurt on the faces he saw at the smaller shows from back in the day, only now he couldn't talk to them.

Basically if you didn't want to be a Christian band you didn't have to be, nobody forced you into it, you did it because there was mild success, you traveled, you were recognized for a time, made some great albums that changed lives and got your 15 minutes. Did you ever thank God for that? I thank him on a daily basis for the gift of music, and on paper I'm a bigger loser than most musicians in this zine, not everyone can do this, get out of the dark artist teen crap, be a man, kick some ass! I've played the pay to play, I've played Gilman St. in Berkley opening for Alkaline Trio and Dashboard Confessional (the clubs biggest crowd to date), and every dive bar the Bay Area could throw at me, and nothing compared to the old Christian shows I played. I wonder if hope is on the horizon, record labels are a thing of the past, the indie artist reigns, there are still church's to rent out, maybe we can be Christian and forgive the past and move on. Also,

THERE'S NO CRYING IN ROCK AND ROLL!=-)

[://www.myspace.com/thebloodystrummers](http://www.myspace.com/thebloodystrummers)
[://www.myspace.com/westerngracemusic](http://www.myspace.com/westerngracemusic)
[://www.myspace.com/lsunderground](http://www.myspace.com/lsunderground)





Jimmy Hotz - Beyond the Crystal Sea
2009 RetroactiveRecords.net

Classic prog-rock fans rejoice. If you know anything about Christian art rock, then you probably already know about this legendary album. Some would almost say mythical, because it was pretty hard to find for a while (even though copies were available on Hotz's website for those that cared to search). Comparisons to ArkAngel, Pink Floyd, Yes, and Kemper Crabb are all well deserved. The re-mastered sound on this re-issue is far superior to any bootleg version out there. And where did they did up those two bonus tracks? They don't sound like throw away tracks at all. They sound like they were just two songs accidentally left off the original release. Many thanks to Born Twice records (sub-label of Retroactive) for resurrecting this classic album

– Matt Crosslin

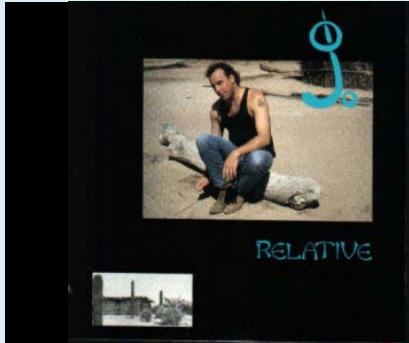


Lost Dogs - Old Angel
2010 TheLostDogs.com

The Dogs are back, inspired by a trip down historic Route 66. I love to look at Route 66 books when out cruising the local B&N. *Old Angel* sounds like a perfect soundtrack to listen to while checking out those picture books. Or maybe even on a future road trip. The sound on this album is classic dogs: Americana with touches of all types of music set to quirky and thought-provoking lyrics. So far my favorite track is "The Glory Road." It's a bit gritty and it mentions the Grapes of Wrath. Can't go wrong there. Stylistically this album still finds the Lost Dogs melding the sounds from each individual member into a cohesive hole. Some of the past albums

seemed to sway a bit to one particular dog (which wasn't a bad thing, it just was the way it was), but *Old Angel* finds the balance between the parts a bit more evenly. A must have for fans of Daniel Amos, The 77s, or The Choir.

– Matt Crosslin



Ojo - Relative
1988 Broken Records

Ojo's only solo album was *Relative*, and it is uniquely different from anything else you might expect from him. This disc had a bunch of his friends on here as well, it is a who's who from alternative Christian music. In addition to Ojo playing guitars, there was also Greg Lawless and Gene Eugene. Michael Knott and Terry Taylor handled some vocal duties, and if memory serves me correctly, I believe Riki Michele was on background vocals too. This disc is remarkable, and if I had to define the sound I would say that it falls into the world music category, but uniquely so. This was a hard disc to find for some time, but in this day and age it is available at iTunes. If you missed this one when it came out, it still holds up well today.

– Steve Ruff



mewithoutyou - It's All Crazy! It's...
2009 ToothandNail.com

It took me a while to come around to checking this out. A ton of mixed reviews by Indie Rock Snobs and disgruntled Post Hard Core fans battling it out online. Me being neither just wasn't in the mood for either musical affair. I love this band, the one and only time I saw

them I almost quit playing music. It's true, they were so tight, so creative, fluid, just reading one another, I never had that in a band, now well into my 30's I don't know if I ever will. I have loved all this bands releases thus far, and I knew this was supposed to be a different direction, ect. True this is a mellower album, but the intensity is still there. The desperation in the voice of Aaron Weiss is more present than ever. Lyrically I can only compare it to *Return of the Frog Queen* from Jeremy Enigk or maybe the *Wind In The Willows*, or other children's tales of old. More acoustic based than the other albums, tons of different instrumentation. This album is a bit of an adventure, you can escape with it, you can reflect with it. Truly creative stuff. Glad I came around.

– Josh Lory



The Choir – Burning Like The Midnight Sun
2010 TheChoir.net

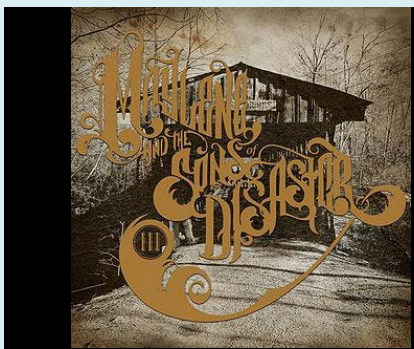
This is The Choir's 12th studio release in their prolific career that started way back in 1985, back when they were known as Youth Choir. *Burning Like The Midnight Sun* is quickly becoming one of my favorite Choir records, and with as many stellar releases as they have, that is quite a feat. I first started listening to these guys back in 1987 at the tender age of 13 years old. The Choir was a band that I have faithfully followed and always admired because there is an honest transparency in the music as well as the lyrics. This band has maintained the integrity of creating music that is unique and artistic, while staying true to themselves and not following the trends of the day.

This new disc is full of ambient guitars, steady bass lines, vibrant drumming and the well placed sax notes that provide warmth that is full, flavored and dense with texture and layers. There are so many standout moments on this album, from Dan Michael's peppered sax notes on the opening track "Midnight Sun", to the eclectic sounds of 'A Friend So Kind', the warm fuzziness of the guitars that set in and settle the tones, turning them into

a velvet breeze that falls over the notes of "Legend Of Old Man Byrd", down to the punctuated guitar that emphasizes Derrí's voice on "I'm Sorry I Laughed", the sparseness of the chiming cymbals at the opening of "Invisible" that winds into the piano keys that begin the wistful last track "Say Goodbye To Neverland". It's all in there from beginning to end, and every track in between. Other tracks not already mentioned are "That Melancholy Ghost", "Mr. Chandler", "Between Bare Trees", "The Word Inside The Word" and "It should Have Been Obvious".

This disc is solid throughout. Derrí's voice is still spot on, full of emotion and what I would describe as a gentle fragility. Steve Hindalong's lyrics are (in my opinion) some of his best. Hindalong is probably my favorite lyricist in music, definitely in my top 5 of all time. He has the unique ability to convey and relate life and all that it entails, from the mundane things that we all encounter, to the truths that define who we are, all are here in his unique delivery and perception. If you hang around on the message boards you will see that the lyrics have created controversy with some, for others it has refined and allowed some to reimagine with greater love the truths we hold dear. This is a must have for any Choir fan, and a great introduction to anyone who might be new.

– Steve Ruff



Maylene & The Suns Of Disaster - III
2009 FerretStyle.com

Dallas Taylor, former Underoath (was never much a fan) vocalist formed Maylene & The Suns Of Disaster in 2004 and released *I* in 2005. *II* followed in 2007, both stellar albums. Dallas is back with a new Maylene album and a new band line up (Taylor is the only returning member). *III* goes with the progression of the previous albums, a little more polished, and slightly more pop. Classic Southern Rock mixed with Screamo/Hardcore/Metal, and a touch of early Guns N' Roses. Great guitar work throughout, a lot of acoustic, slide, and even

banjo mixed into this shred-fest! Stand out tracks for me are 'Just a Shock', 'Step Up (I'm On It)', and 'Oh Lonely Grave'. If you liked the first two, you'll like this one for sure. Good for driving around on a hot Summer day, turned up to 11, alone, rockin'!

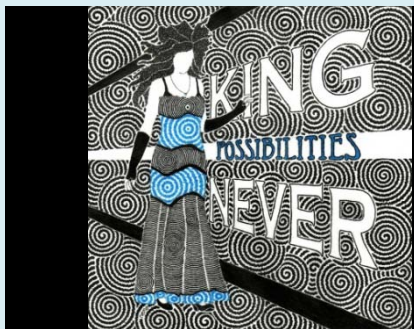
– Josh Lory



Doug Burr – O Ye Devastator
2010 VelvetBlueMusic.com

This is Doug Burr's follow up to his acclaimed *On Promenade* album. *O Ye Devastator* is hands down simply a brilliant album. True to form for Burr, this is poetic melancholy at its finest. Burr's voice is haunting, hitting the notes where the need to be hit and straining with emotion that drips through every verse and chorus. Doug has a storyteller's heart and is able to write in a way that I think most can relate to. This disc opens with the standout track "A Black Wave Is Comin", and continues to build musically and sonically like stepping stones to the last breath that we exhale before the heartache and hazardous lessons of life fall around us, threatening to fall upon us. This is a record that you must have, full of reflection and the often longed for promise of hope that exists just beyond our grasp, relational missteps and upsets, and love that is present and intoxicating. Doug Burr has crafted a masterpiece that exceeds the boundaries of *On Promenade*.

– Steve Ruff



King Never – Possibilities
2010 KingNever.com

Some of you might remember an underground Christian alternative band called

Able Cain back in the 90s. Matt McCabe, the guitarist for Able Cain, went on to form King Never. That was just a bit of background for you. King Never has released several albums. The most recent release *Possibilities* is "A concept album featuring ambient, alternative and progressive rock songs that chronicle Sonja's journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening." Don't let the fact they decided to put "ambient" first in the list fool you – this album does frequently rock. Songwriting and recording qualities are both very high from beginning to end. In fact, you don't have to take my word for it – you can listen to the entire album on their website before you decide to purchase it. And you will decide to buy it (hoping my Jedi mind trick skills are still up to snuff). For influences, McCabe lists everyone from The Police to King Crimson to The Choir. If you like music in that arena of alternative rock, you will also like this album.

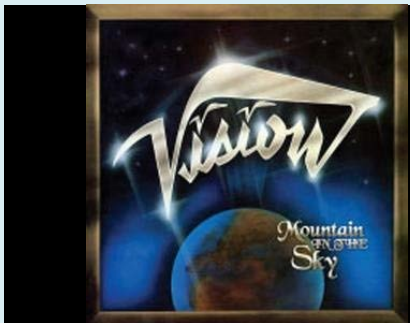
– Matt Crosslin



A Hill To Die Upon – Infinite Titanic Immortal
2009 BombworksRecords.com

I have to admit that I never got black metal when I first heard it. I think I was trying to listen to it as if it were death metal, but there are subtle differences. Black metal is more like alternative death metal... if that makes sense. I went in to listening to the debut CD from *A Hill To Die Upon* a skeptic and came out a fan. Of course, reading other reviews online, it seems that *Infinite Titanic Immortal* is considered one of the better black metal releases of the year – so maybe that was what helped convert me. The opening instrumental track sounds like a modern-day Viking call to war. The brutality just continues from there on out. But the brutality is not just created by playing all the instruments at breakneck speeds – although that does frequently happen. There are also many subtle and obvious touches of atmosphere throughout the songs that work quite well. Whether you are the type of person that loves all extreme music or just has the occasional itch for extreme music – this album will be just the fix for you.

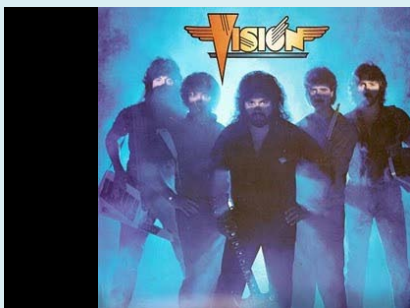
– Matt Crosslin



Vision – Mountain In the Sky
2010 RetroactiveRecords.net

Another obscure classic resurrected by Born Twice Records. Vision is probably best known to some as the band that had two members of Lynyrd Skynyrd after they survived the infamous plane crash and converted to Christianity. Vision is usually labeled as Southern rock. While there is some southern rock in there, there is also a progressive side to many of the songs. It kind of all mixes together in some places. The first song on the album is good example of this mixture. They don't really ever get more progressive or more southern than this song for the whole disc. This album was also obviously recorded on a tight budget. The digital processes used to clean up the sound are slightly obvious in some places. Sometimes you think there is a weird buzz in the background, but it turns out to be the guitars way back in the mix. With an indie album this old, this isn't a complaint as much as an observation. Several of these songs were re-recorded on the self-titled follow-up, where they sound a bit beefier, fuller, and even rawer than here.

– Matt Crosslin



Vision – Vision
2010 RetroactiveRecords.net

This is the second album by Vision – first on a label. This album is a little less progressive and a little less southern than *Mountains in the Sky*. Being in the studio gives this a beefier, heavier sound than their first album, even though the songs are probably more pop-oriented. Whereas fans of progressive rock might have found something to like in the independent release, they might not find

as much here. This is a well-written and performed album. Readers of our magazine that also like mainstream rock with a bit of progressive edge will like this. If you are looking for another Jimmy Hotz or even Kansas, you might want to look elsewhere.

– Matt Crosslin



Voice Of The Mysterons - They Have Pulled Down Deep Heaven On Their Heads
2007 BootToHead.com

Remember Blaster The Rocket Man (Boy)? Hands down one of the Punkest things to hit the Christian market since Scaterd Few! Vocalist Daniel Peterson (Aka Oto Bott) has another band that is just as amazing! This band is the real deal, that controlled chaos that makes real Punk Rock so wonderful. Fans of such creative genius such as NoMeansNo, Dead Kennedys, and Scaterd Few will love this album. Deep thought provoking lyrics that paint a picture with the dark insanity of the music. This album has a steady flow, should be listened to as a whole. It's really hard to pick a few stand out songs because they all stand out. Crazy song titles I can't stress enough that this is REAL PUNK ROCK!

– Josh Lory



Grave Digger – Inner Sanctum
2009 RetroactiveRecords.net

I am a huge fan of Horror Punk! The Misfits are easily in my top 20 all time greatest bands list, with both Danzig and Michale Graves on vocals, I like 'em both the same. I find it to be one of the last true Punk Rock Scenes out there, very DIY, core fans, small venues, never really broke mainstream. Some of the best singers I've ever heard play Horror Punk, give

Nim Vind a listen, or Blitzkid and you'll hear for yourself. As with most scenes there is a lot of crap to sort through, so when I heard there was a Christian Horror Punk band I had to hear it. Only two other bands came to mind in the Christian market to do this the amazing Blaster The Rocket Man (or Boy), and the Deadlines first album that was a weak attempt. Grave Robber can hold there own with the best of the genre. Their debut, "Be Afraid" is a fantastic album full of crooning vocals and a ton of sing along chorus'. "Inner Sanctum" picks up where the debut leaves off with bigger production and maturer song writing. 'Fear No Evil' is the standout track for me, it's classic, no doubt about it. 'Tell Tale Heart' is a Boo-Wop of a good time, nice harmonies throughout. 'Valley Of Dry Bones' has an 80's metal feel to it, very different than their other material, still good. 'Altered States' has a bunch of Wo-o's to get a crowd going crazy, would love to see these guys live in full Gory! This band is fun, what more does one need?

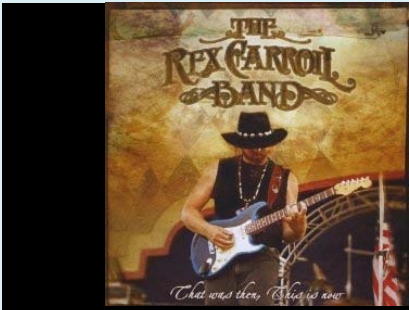
– Josh Lory



Disaffection - Begin the Revolution
2010 BombworksRecords.com

Disaffection is every classic thrash metal head's dream band. Seriously, these guys open up with sound snippets of a helicopter and bullet fire in what sounds like a firefight during a war, then comes the piercing guitars, gang vocals, bludgeoning drums and driving bass that I can only imagine is pumped out by ferocious, neck breaking head banging. These guys do thrash metal the way it should be done. If you like thrash, this is the best thing I have heard in a long time. My initial impressions were Megadeth, Metallica and Slayer, circa the 1980's. I don't say that because these guys have tried to copy those bands or be the "Christian" version of those bands, but I say that because that is the pinnacle of the thrash genre, and these guys hearken back to those days in a brutal return to form. Buy this, turn it up and let it play! Formed in 2005 in Brazil, these guys are genre defining.

– Steve Ruff



Rex Carroll Band – That Was Then, This Is Now
2010 RetroactiveRecords.net

Is Southern rock making a comeback? Seems like we have a major southern fried theme going on in the reviews this month. If you know anything about guitar players and Christian music, you know who Rex Carroll is. Look up “shred” in the dictionary and you will find Carroll’s picture. Even people that hate hair metal give him props for his playing skills. Well, this is the album for people that hate hair metal but love good guitar. Carroll spent the last several years studying Stevie Ray Vaughn, and it shows. Throw in a dash of ZZ Top, a bit of the old Whitecross guitar shred, Carroll’s distinct blues voice, and you have this album. All of the other members of the band also bring their A-game. You would have to be a pretty stuck up indie rock snob to not even crack a smile while listening to this. Everyone likes a good slab of southern boogie blues hard rock slathered in white gravy from time to time.

– Matt Crosslin



My Silent Wake/The Drowning
2010 BombworksRecords.com

Ian Arkley formed My Silent Wake in 2005. For all you metalheads, Ian has played with Seventh Angel, Ashen Mortality, Paramaecium and a couple of other acts as well. This split with The Drowning is great! The first 4 songs belong to My Silent Wake and each one is very different from the other. The first track “I Am Eternity” is a slow, mournful dirge that will get stuck in your head for days. “Bleak Endless Winter” is the second track and is more middle of the road metal with vocals

that are growled and spit at you over wailing guitars and thumping bass lines, but the pace changes several times through this song as well making it very unique. The third track is “Devoid of Light” and it is very mellow, quiet and vocally sparse letting the music really convey some emotion while perfectly setting up the last song “Rebirth” which comes in at over 23 minutes long. “Rebirth” starts with an atmospheric bass line accompanied by various ambient sounds, increases to a very droning melancholic mid section and ends with a heavier guitar based structure while repeating the same lines over and over, and then closing with a spoken word... sonically it is very, very pleasing.

While starting out with 4 such solid tracks, The Drowning had their work cut out for them on the split disc. These guys are also along the same lines of gothic gloom and death metal, but where My Silent Wake was more melodic, The Drowning is crunchier, heavier and employs death metal vocals on every track. What I love about these four songs is that there is the heaviness and the stand out guitar work, the gravel of the vocals, and then this heavy, thick desolate ambience that really encompasses the entire sound. The songs are “The Doomsday Feire” followed by “Arc Light”, “Silent Epiphany” and then ending with “A Photograph” which chops back and forth between spoken vocals and death metal growls.

This is a highly recommended disc that is will wet your appetite for gloom, doom and gothic metal, and then leave you begging for more.

– Steve Ruff

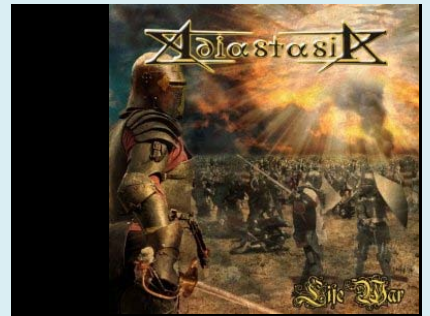


King James – The Fall (re-issue)
2010 RetroactiveRecords.net

The Fall was originally released when so many hair metal bands were trying to be grunge. And most were failing – they tried too hard to change every part of their sound... even the parts that they couldn’t handle. King James was heads above the pack, because grunge is just an influence. For example, Jimi Bennett doesn’t try to force his voice lower than it can

go, and Rex Carroll still plays solos. I love this CD – a great mix of melodic music and alternative heaviness – they got everything right that grunge got wrong.

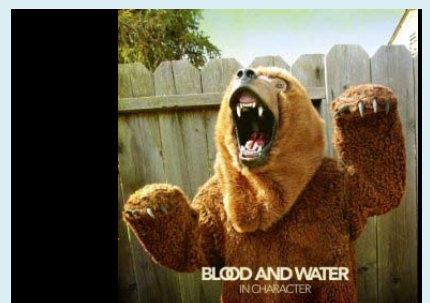
– Matt Crosslin



Adiasstasia – Life War (Collector’s Edition)
2010 BombworksRecords.com

Somehow a Helloween CD got sent to us for review. Oh, wait a second – wrong continent. This is the Brazilian band Adiasstasia. While they aren’t really a full-on clone of any one band, you can easily recognize the influences of all of the big players in the power metal scene – Gamma Ray, Stratovarius, Maiden, Helloween, etc. This is a re-mastered re-issue of a 2006 album with new artwork, because apparently the original version sold out. If you are in to this type of metal, you can see why. They nail the sound almost perfectly while playing every instrument very competently. While this may not appeal to the average DTL reader that only likes alternative / punk / hardcore – those with broader tastes that dip into classic metal will want to check this out.

– Matt Crosslin



Blood and Water – In Character
2010 Eden-Records.com

Energetic alternative rock with some punk and reggae influences. Really catchy stuff – came in last minute, so I wish I had more room to write. These guys sound modern without going “generic pop-punk wanna-be.” If more flavor-of-the-month bands sounded like this instead, there would be more hope for the business. Almost sounds like they could be the 2010 version of the better 1990s underground upbeat alt-Christian bands.

– Matt Crosslin

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